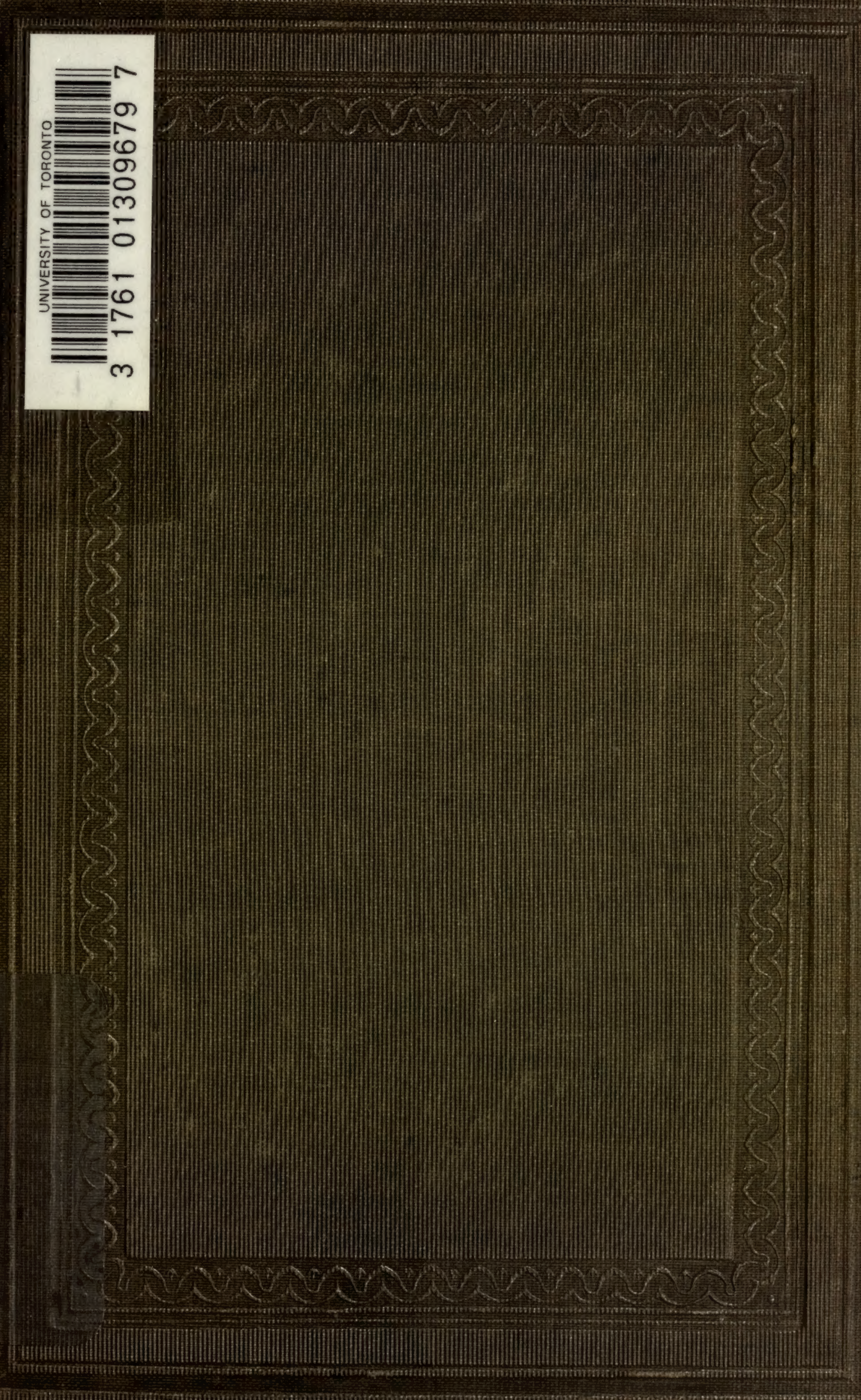

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SELECT WORKS

OF

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D. LL.D.

EDITED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW,

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VOL. II.

EDINBURGH: THOMAS CONSTABLE AND CO.
HAMILTON, ADAMS, AND CO., LONDON.
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LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

BY

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LECTURES ON THE ROMANS.

LECTURE LI.

ROMANS VIII. 10.

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

I HAVE already affirmed, that to have Christ in us is tantamount to the Spirit being in us. Christ dwells in us by the Holy Ghost. It is not because of this that the body is dead; but it is because of sin. The work of the Spirit in us does not counteract the temporal death of the body, however much it may counteract the second or eternal death to which the soul would have else been liable. It does not pour the elixir of immortality into the material frame—however much it may strengthen and prepare the imperishable spirit for its immortal wellbeing. Still, after Christ has taken up His abode within us and hath made a temple of our body, it is a temple that is to be destroyed. There remaineth a virus in the fabric, that sooner or later will work its dissolution; and as the law of temporal death is still unrepealed, even in the case of those whom Christ hath redeemed from the curse of the law; and as, in harmony with this palpable fact, there is still the doctrine that sin lurks and lingers in the moral system even after the renovation which this Spirit hath given to it—this suggests a very important analogy, from the further prosecution of which we may perhaps gather, not a useless speculation, but a substantial and a practical benefit.

Suppose for a moment that the body, by some preternatural operation, were wholly delivered of its corrupt ingredient—that the sinful tendencies which reside there were not only kept in check but eradicated, so that all its appetites were at one with the desires of a pure and perfect spirit—then there would be nothing to hinder our reception even now into the courts of the celestial. With such a harmony in our moral system as a soul all whose aspirations were on the side of holiness, and nothing to thwart these aspirations in the materialism by which it was encompassed, we see nought wanting to constitute a heavenly or an angelic character—nor do we understand why death should in that case interpose between our state of being upon earth, and our state of blessedness for ever. And, accordingly, we read that on Nature's dissolution, when the dead shall rise from their graves in triumph, they who remain alive and who have never fallen asleep must, to become incorruptible also, at least be changed. The change on those who are alive and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, does for them what the death and the resurrection do for those who have been saints upon earth, ere they ascend as embodied saints into heaven. It is on the corruptible putting on incorruption that the mortal puts on immortality; and the reason why even those in whom Christ dwells have still a death to undergo is, that sin, though it no longer tyrannizes, still adheres to them—and the wearing down of the body by disease, and the arrest that is laid on all the functions and operations of its physiology, and the transformation of it into inanimate matter, and the mouldering of it into dust, and then its reascent from the grave in which it for ages may have lain—these it would appear are the steps of a refining process, whereby the now vile body is changed into a glorious one, and the regenerated spirit is furnished with its suitable equipment for the delights and the services of eternity.

To the question then, why is it that though Christ dwells in us still the body is dead or liable to death—the answer is, 'because of sin;' and from this very answer do we gather that sin is still present with every believer in the world, and as universally present too as death is universal. In regard to temporal death, there is one lot we know that falleth to the wicked and the righteous. And therefore though these two classes do not stand alike related to sin, yet both are so related to it as to partake in common of the mortality which, ere they are so changed as to become incorruptible, it appears that all must undergo.

The righteous, we all see, die in common with the wicked; and the text tells us that the death of the body is because of sin. There must therefore be something that respects sin, which the righteous hold in common with the wicked—seeing that because of it there is a common suffering which both do undergo. What then is this common relation which they hold to sin as the cause, and in virtue of which they have a common participation in that bodily death that is here represented as the consequence?

In the first place, it cannot surely be that it is still inflicted on both as the judicial sentence which has been attached to transgression. It is very true the announcement from the first has been, that he who sinneth shall die; and that, in reference to all from whom the condemnation hath not been turned away, temporal death may be regarded as forming a part of their sentence. But it cannot surely be viewed in this light, in reference to those of whom the Bible says that unto them there is no condemnation—in reference to those who savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and so have the benefit of that expiation which He hath rendered, and of that everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in. It cannot for a moment be thought that any suffering of theirs is at all requisite to complete that great satisfaction which was made on Calvary for the sins of the faithful. It is said of Him, who by one offering hath perfected the work of our reconciliation and made an end of iniquity, that He trode the winepress alone, and that of the people there was none with Him. To Him belongs the whole glory of our atonement. He bore it all, for He looked and there was none to help, He wondered that there was none to uphold; and then did His own arm bring salvation. It cannot be that by any death of ours, then, we eke out as it were the satisfaction which hath been already rendered for sin; and when Paul says that he fills up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ in his flesh, it can never be that by any sufferings which the believer can endure—not even by the last and most appalling of them all, he makes good any deficiency in that great act by which, and by which alone, transgression was finished, and the controversy between God and the sinner for ever set at rest.

The meaning then of a believer's death is not to expiate the guilt of his sin—it is to root out the existence of it. It is not to cancel the punishment, for that is already done—it is to give the finishing blow, as it were, to the crucifixion of its power. It is not inflicted upon him as the last discharge of the wrath of God, after which he is conclusively delivered therefrom; but it is sent to him as a release from the plague and the presence of that corruption which adheres, it would seem, as long as the body adheres to us. It has not, it would appear, been made part of the economy of grace, that on our entering within its limits by accepting of the gospel, we are forthwith delivered from those ceaseless and besetting tendencies which attach to our present bodily constitution. This could have been done without death. If a man on the moment of believing were to be suddenly changed, in the way that they shall be who are alive at the last day, and are caught up alive to meet our Lord in the air—then at once would he have been made sinless in the material framework, as well as sinless in the regenerated part of his nature; and without the stepping-stones of death, and the resolution of his body into sepulchral rottenness and dust, and the resurrection of it free from the taint by which it now is pervaded—without these stepping-stones at all, might he at once have winged his ascent into heaven, and had its gate opened to him, because now as free from the presence of sin as he was from its penalty. And thus, without passing at all through the dark valley of the shadow of death, might he have been put into immediate preparation for the pure and lofty communions of paradise. This might have been the order of God's administration, but it is not so in fact. He hath arranged it otherwise. He hath thought fit, instead of working a miraculous change on the appetites of the body, to work that change on the principles and desires of the spirit—to renew the inner man, but to perpetuate for a season the outer man. He hath thought fit to make that gospel by which peace is established between God and the believer—still to make it the harbinger, not of peace but of war among the elements of that moral system which is in the believer himself. There might have been an instantaneous transition to all the repose and harmony and serene triumph of a virtue that actuated every faculty of the mind, and which met with nothing to thwart or to impede its dictates in the vile affections of a body that still would grovel, were it permitted, among its own base and sordid gratifications. But this is not the way in which it hath appeared meet unto the wisdom of God that our translation shall take place from earth to heaven. Like the processes both of His natural and His moral kingdom, this is accomplished not instantly but gradually; and there is a long intervening series of conflicts and exercises through life, and a death and a burial and a resurrection after it, ere the whole body and soul and spirit shall be fully matured for the high fellowships of eternity. And meanwhile, what Christ said of the world holds true of every individual who receives Him—"I came not to bring peace but a sword." I came to raise an internal war among the feelings and the faculties of those who believe in me. I came to infuse a new principle within the limits of their moral economy, against which all the powers and principles of the old man will rise up in battle-array; and instead of that harmony within which is felt by the seraph above, and felt even by many a secure and satisfied sinner below—there will be the war of rival tendencies, by which the believer's heart shall be kept in constant agitation; there will be all the pains and perplexities of many a sore conflict within; there will be an agony so fierce as to have been imaged in Scripture by a crucifixion; there will not, it is true, be unmitigated suffering—there will be a mixture of triumph and of tumult throughout the period of that singular transition which each believer must undergo—of triumph to that spirit which is now made willing, and of anguish to that body which is now made a sacrifice.

You see then, I trust, what that is of sin which is common here to the children of light and the children of this world; and what that is which constitutes the distinction between them. While both are alive upon earth, they have both one kind of body; and just as the eye of each takes in the same impression from the same objects standing visibly before it, so are the appetites of each liable to the same inclination from the allurement of the same objects when brought within their reach. The unhappy drunkard who at the very sight of his inflaming beverage is visited with an affection thereunto which he finds to be uncontrollable—suppose him to be made a convert at this moment, there is no change impressed upon it by his organ of taste. The relation that now subsists between his palate and the liquor that has so long and so frequently regaled it is the same as before—the desire for it is not extinguished; and the physical affinity that now is between the appetite and its wonted indulgence, is not changed into a physical repulsion. In the act of regeneration the bodily affection is not eradicated; but there is infused into the moral system a power for keeping it in check: And long after the old man hath become a new creature, we do not see that the propensity which at one time tyrannized over him is clearly and conclusively done away. It is not rooted out, my brethren; it is only resisted: and all that regeneration has done for him in the world is to give him that moral force of determination and courage by which he is enabled to resist it with success. He is now able to control that which before was uncontrollable. Were this and all his other rebel appetites only rooted out; and were he under the dominion of a pure and holy principle, and of it alone, to serve God on earth without a struggle—then might he even now be borne aloft on angelic pinions, and placed, without so hideous a transition as that of failing and sickening and dying, in the city which hath foundations. But no: this, it would appear, is the arena of his discipline for eternity; and it is so by being an arena of contest. The elements of moral evil are not purged away from his corporeal framework; but there is a spiritual element infused, which if it cannot destroy the former will at least subordinate them. The apostle complained of his body being vile; but herein he exercised himself, to keep that body under subjection, lest he should be a castaway. He is like unto a heathen, in having a vile body; he is unlike unto a heathen, in having now a spirit within him by which the body is subjected. Both have in them the desires of nature; but the one fights with these desires, and the other fulfils them. Both are lured by solicitations to evil; but while the one is only lured, the other is led by them. He is led away with divers lusts. He is led away with the error of the wicked, and so falls from his steadfastness. The very same evil propensity might offer to lead both; but while the one consents to be so led, the other refuses. He gives himself up to be led by another master. In the language of the apostle, he is led by the Spirit of God, and so approves himself to be one of God's children. He is led by the Spirit, and so fulfilleth not the lusts of the flesh.

You also see what the use of death is to a Christian. It is not laid upon him as a sentence of condemnation: the whole weight of that sentence is already borne. It is not to complete his justification: that is already perfected for ever by the one offering. It is to release him in fact from his warfare. It is to deliver him from the presence of his great enemy. It is to remove from him that load under which he now groans being burdened, and which forced from the holy apostle the exclamation of his wretchedness. It is to assure him who hath fought the good fight and hath finished his course, that the battle is now ended, and that now the repose and the triumph of victory await him. To the last hour of his life it is the same foul and tainted body that it ever was; and his only achievement upon it, is not that he hath purified its nature, but that he hath not suffered it to have the mastery. He has all along been upheld against its encroachments by the vigour of a counteracting principle within, even of that Spirit which is life because of righteousness. These two have been in perpetual conflict with each other from the hour of the heavenly birth to the hour of the earthly dissolution; and the way in which it is terminated is not by the body in its present state being transformed, but by the body in its present state being destroyed.

The fact of the body being still subjected to death because of sin, is the strongest experimental argument that can be urged for heaven being a place to which sin can find no entry. It is not in the way of penalty that the Christian has to die—for the whole of that penalty has already been sustained. It is not exacted from him as the payment of a debt—for Christ our surety hath paid a full and a satisfying ransom. It is not then to help out the justification which is already complete in Him, nor to remove a flaw from that title-deed which we have received perfect from His hand. It stands connected, in short, with the sanctification of the believer, and has nought to do with that sentence which Christ has fully expiated—with that legal chastisement which was laid upon Him who bore it all. The whole amount and meaning of it is, that our bodies are impregnated with a moral virus which might be discharged from them, it is certain, by a fiat of the Almighty—even as with those who shall be found alive on the day of resurrection. But this is not the way in which God hath seen meet so to discharge it. It is by death that the thing is to be done; it is, in the first instance, by the departure of the spirit breaking out of its tainted and leprous prisonhold—and then by the resolution into fragments and into dust of this materialism that its tenant hath abandoned—and then by the assembling again of all its particles, though without the corrupt infusion that formerly pervaded them.—And so the transformation of the whole into what is now called a glorified body—a body like unto that of Christ, and free even now from the tendency to evil. And not till the whole of this change take effect upon it, is it fit for admission to the upper realms of love and purity and righteousness. The justice of God would have recoiled from the acceptance of a sinner, and so an expiation had to be made; and the holiness of that place where God dwelleth would have recoiled from the approaches of one whose character was still tainted with sin, even though its guilt had been expiated—and so it is, that there must be a sanctification as well as an atonement—there must be a renewal as well as a sacrifice. For the one, Christ had to suffer and to die—for the other, man has also to die, and so to fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ. And it is indeed a most emphatic demonstration of heaven's sacredness, that to protect its courts from violation, not even the most pure and sainted Christian upon earth can in his present earthly garb find admittance therein—that loved and revered as he is by his friends and his family, and little as they see about him of that which is unworthy even of fellowship with angels, even he would be deemed a nuisance in that high and holy place where nothing that offendeth can enter—that ere the gate of the New Jerusalem be opened for his spirit, he must leave his tainted body behind him; and ere he walk embodied there, the framework that he had on earth must first be taken down, and be made to pass in mysterious transformation through that dismal region of skulls and of skeletons, where the mouldering wreck of many human generations is laid. This death, which even the holiest of believers have to undergo, speaks loudly both to the loathsomeness of sin, and to the sensitive the lofty sacredness of heaven: And oh, how should it teach all, who by faith have admitted the hope of glory into their hearts, that in so doing they have embarked in a warfare against moral evil—that the expectation of bliss in heaven is at utter variance with the wilful indulgence of sin upon earth—and that, by the very act of embracing the gospel, they have thrown down the gauntlet of hostility to sin; and they must struggle against it, and pray against it, and prevail against it.

Now this principle of hostility to sin wherewith the believer is actuated cometh down upon him, like every other good and perfect gift, from above. All that is evil about him still cometh from himself, and from the vile body by which he is encompassed. The gracious ingredient of his now regenerated nature does not extinguish the corrupt ingredient of it. It only, as it were, keeps it down; and without delivering him from its presence, delivers him from its prevalency and its power. That it is which constitutes the struggle of the Christian life. This is the sore conflict which is carried on through many discouragements, and perhaps some defeats, and at least frequent alternations and variations of fortune. Nevertheless, throughout all the fluctuations of this spiritual history, the seed of blissful immortality is there; the element of a holy and celestial nature is at work;

the honest aspiration after God and godliness will never be extinguished. A life of well-doing, and a produce in the fruits of righteousness, will force their way among all the impediments of a vile materialism. These two rival and opposing ingredients will at length be detached the one from the other; and of these the body will become dead because of sin, and the spirit be life because of righteousness.

With an unconverted man there are not two such conflicting elements. The mind and the body are at one. The evil tendencies are given way to. He not only submits to the instigations of the flesh, but, in the language of Scripture, he sows unto the flesh; that is, he devises and deliberately provides expedients for its gratification—laying up for the flesh, as well as fulfilling the lusts thereof. The whole man pulls as it were in one direction; and that is a direction altogether towards the creature, and altogether away from the Creator. He soweth unto the flesh, and of the flesh he shall reap corruption. As he falleth, so shall he rise; and the body wherewith he is enveloped on the day of resurrection, will not, like that of the glorified saint, be expurgated of its tendencies to evil: but as he indulged them through life, so will they rise up against him in the full vigour of their absolute and imperious sway, and be his merciless, his inexorable tormentors through all eternity. As he never resisted them with effect here, so there will he find them to be irresistible. They will lord over him; and he will be the miserable slave of vile and worthless affections, under the sense of which his now convicted soul cannot escape from the agonies of remorse—that undying worm which gives to hell its fiercest anguish, and by far its sorest tribulation. He, thus pursued by a fire that is unquenchable within, and a fear without of that holy and righteous countenance that is now turned in rebuke towards him, will be made to taste of that second death which has been called the wages of sin, because it is both its penal and its natural consummation.

Not so with him whose spirit has been made righteous; and who, vexed and annoyed with the urgencies of his vile body, has to the hour of death carried on against it a resolute and unsparing warfare. He will have no part in the second death. His spirit because of his righteousness has become meet for that life which is both spiritual and everlasting. So soon as it quits its earthly tenement it will be with Christ in Paradise, where freed from the incumbrances of a tainted materialism, it will instantly find, that though to live for a season in the flesh was needful and salutary, yet to have departed and to be with Christ is far better. He soweth to the Spirit here, and hereafter he shall reap of the Spirit life everlasting. He has the very evil tendencies which the other hath who soweth unto the flesh; but instead of giving to them his consent, he enters with them into combat, and he fights the good fight which terminates in victory, and he earns the blessedness of him that overcometh, and of him that endureth unto the end. Those inclinations of a corrupt nature, which the other pampered into lordly and domineering appetites that shall wield for ever their merciless tyranny over him, he hath in every way thwarted and buffeted and starved—so that though still alive while the breath was in his body, and he had even to weep their presence on his death-bed, and still to mourn even then the carnalities and the spiritual sins which he could not utterly extinguish—yet his reward is, that at the moment of dissolution they will expire for ever, and not be raised up again to be his plagues and his persecutors through eternity. The reward is—that his risen body shall then be in fullest harmony with the desires of his glorified spirit, and that the evil instigations which so perplex and disquiet him on earth shall never haunt or harass him in heaven. He will be altogether freed from those corrupt elements which still adhere to the unbeliever when he arises from his grave, and which constitute in fact the elements of his moral hell. There will be nothing adverse to the love or to the services of God in any part of his constitution; and he will be fully enabled to glorify the Lord, with his soul and body and spirit, which are the Lord's.

This is not an idle speculation. It may be carried personally and practically to the conscience. Are you or are you not engaged in a warfare with moral evil? Are you busily employed in the work of subduing and bringing under discipline all the irregularities of your perverse nature? Or, instead of this, are you in peace with yourself, and that because of the friendly terms in which your spirit and your body are with each other? Remember that there is a peace where there is no peace. Do you imagine that you are at peace with God because you believe the gospel? Remember that Paul preached the gospel, yet bad he not kept the body under subjection he would have been a castaway. And therefore in this did he always exercise himself, mortifying his affections for the things which are beneath—and this not only the grosser affections of our nature, but the more reputable, the more refined—the affections for wealth, for honour, for fame, for literary reputation—for these too are among the things which are beneath, these also will perish in the using, these have their place on earth, and have no place in heaven; and it is only by the spirit being above all these, and resting its affections on the things which are above, it is only thus that it will be made to inherit life, and because of its righteousness.

LECTURE LII.

ROMANS VIII. 11, 12.

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh."

Ver. 11.—In the last verse it is affirmed that Christ being in us will not avail to prevent the death of the body, though it will avail to the preparing of the soul for life everlasting. And in the present verse, the apostle recurs to the body, and now affirms that it, too, will at length have a benefit conferred on it—that neither is it altogether overlooked in this great work of regeneration—that though permitted for a season to moulder in the dust, and though every vestige of what it was is made to disappear; yet will it emerge from the hideous receptacle in which it lies, and come forth a quickened and a glorified body on the day of resurrection—that though the present occupation of it by God's Holy Spirit does not save it from decaying into a loathsome spectacle of corruption; yet if that Spirit dwell in us now, it will again animate that matter which has gone into dissolution—raising it to a new framework, and investing it as before with all those graces which are expressive of the life and sensibility within. But it is to be observed that the wicked as well as the righteous are to rise again—that all the dead both small and great are to stand before God—and that therefore there must be a something which peculiarizes the resurrection of the believer from that of a sinful and unconverted man. Now we know of no other peculiarity than this—that his body shall be delivered from that moral virus against which he struggled through life, and by overcoming which he is to be rewarded with a complete and conclusive exemption from its presence for ever—that the same power which helped him to the conquest, will rid him altogether of his enemy; and his body will be so purified and transformed, as to become like unto the glorious body of Christ. The wicked are not so. As the tree falleth so it lies; and as they went to their graves, with all the propensities of corruption unmitigated, they will again come forth from their graves, with these propensities in lordly and despotic rigour to be their tyrants and their tormentors through all eternity. And this, I imagine, will explain a verse which enters into the prophetic narrative of the earthly consummation of all things—"He that is unjust let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous let him be righteous still, and he that is holy let him be holy still."

Now it is, in the first place, to be remarked, that the very same agent who raised up Christ from the dead is to raise up all who are in Christ also. That He was the agent employed by God in the resurrection of the Saviour, may, I think, be gathered from the passage where it is said that He was declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; and still more obviously from the text—(and this we hold to be the reason why it is said of Christ risen from the dead, that He is become the first-fruits of them who slept)—"Every man in his own order—Christ the first-fruits, afterwards they who are Christ's at his coming." But there is a still more important set of passages that point, we think, to a very pleasing analogy between Christ's resurrection from the grave and the resurrection of our souls into newness of life—that ascribe both of these events to the operation of the same power, and regard it as alike the function of the Holy Ghost, to have restored the natural life to the body of the Saviour when it lay insensible in the tomb, and the spiritual to those who are dead in trespasses and sins, but are awakened from this death at the moment of believing in Him. And thus I would understand it of Paul, that he longs to make sure of the renewal of his soul unto holiness, when he speaks of his desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection; and I can enter into the analogy which he states in these words, that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of His Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life—and that thus it is that we are planted together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection. We read in various places of our being made conformable to His death by dying unto sin; and so are we made conformable to His resurrection by living unto righteousness. The thing is still more expressly affirmed in the Epistle to the Ephesians, where mention is made of "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him who filleth all in all." And then he adds, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins"—"even when we were dead in sins, hath God quickened us together with Christ."

Now this analogy between the raising of the body and the regeneration of the soul, both of which are ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, forcibly reminds us of the history of the material creation in the book of Genesis, where it is distinctly affirmed, that at the very first footsteps of that glorious transformation, by which a dark and disordered chaos was evolved into light and loveliness and harmony, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And so when the Spirit begins with the soul of man, it is a perfect chaos of moral darkness and disorder on which it has to operate—whence it gradually advances from one degree of grace and godliness unto another, till, as God rejoiced on the seventh day over that which a little before was without form and void, so God rejoices over us, when, in looking to the product of this new or second creation, He sees that it is all very good. You know enough, I trust, of our depravity by nature, to admit of our moral world that it is indeed a chaos—that, though there be occasional gleams of the bright and the beautiful, yet that the great master sin of ungodliness stalks triumphant over the face of society—that though, as in every companionship even of iniquity, there must be recognised principles of truth and honour and fellowship which bind together the members of the human commonwealth, and make it a possible thing for society to subsist, yet that, as if altogether broken loose from the Great Original of being, each individually hath betaken himself to the counsel of his own heart and the sight of his own eyes. The enlightened assertors of a native and original corruption in our species, never dispute that there is much of the fair and amiable and upright in human intercourse; and that this gives rise to many fine and graceful evolutions in the walks of social life. But what they affirm—and they deem that they have the experimental light both of observation and conscience upon their side—is, that while busily engaged, whether in the virtues or in the vices of our intercourse with each other, we one and all of us by nature have renounced our proper intercourse with God—that, intimately joined as we are to our fellows of the species by the ties of patriotism and neighbourhood and family affection, we live in a state of moral and spiritual disjunction from God—that just as if the gravitation that bound our planet to the great central luminary of our system were suspended, and it were to take its own random way in space, so have we broke adrift as it were from that main attraction to which all the duties and moralities of life are subordinate. And just as the stray world might still have active physical principles of its own—its cohesion, and its magnetism, and its laws of fluidity, and its busy atmospherical processes, even after the sun had ceased to have the imperial sway over it—so in our stray species are there a thousand mutual and internal principles of constant operation—the resentment, and the love, and the domestic affinities, and the dread of authority, and the delight in approbation, and the sense of shame, and the mighty power which lies in the awards of the general voice —principles these, which, in their turn, either agitate or arouse or restrain or even embellish the face of society; yet still may it be a society altogether without the regard or the reverence of God. In reference to Him, the family of mankind may be an exiled family; and while the men of its successive generations pass through the little hour of life, some deformed by earthly vices, and others decked in the ornaments of an earth-born morality, yet, equally aloof as all may still be from the virtue of that great relationship which is between the thing that is formed and Him who hath formed it, it may still hold true of our species, that we by nature are in a state of disruption from God—asunder from Him as to all right and habitual fellowship in time; and, if we decline the reunion which He himself proposes, likely to remain thus asunder from the great fountain of light and love and happiness through all eternity.

Now that this is the very chaos in which humanity is involved, we hold to be pretty obvious from the broad and general aspect of society. But by far the most useful conviction that can be wrought upon this subject is that which is carried home to the bosom of individuals, by a manifestation of their own heart to the conscience of each of them. It is not possible to lay open the characters of all to the inspection of any; but it may be possible to lay open the character of any man to the inspection of himself—and thus it is, that far the most profitable of all moral demonstrations, whether from the pulpit or from the press, are those which reveal to each individually the intimacies of his own spirit; and by which he is enabled, as in a mirror, to recognise such a likeness to the portrait of his own inner man as his conscience can respond unto. And therefore would we bid each unconverted man who is now present to enter upon this recognisance of himself, and to see whether the very habit of his soul is not a habit of practical atheism—whether it be not true that God is scarcely if at all in his thoughts—whether he be not an utter stranger to the gait and the attitude of His servant—and whether the question is ever taken up, or ever brought to a conclusion, that is afterwards in very deed and history proceeded on, "What is the will of God in the matter before me?" We do not charge you with any transgression against the social or domestic principles of our nature, any more than we deny of a rambling planet which now flounders its capricious and unregulated way in space, that there the chemical affinities, or there the active play of all those influences which belong to its own peculiar and physical system, are unknown. But we do charge you with the disownal of the authority of God. We affirm that against Him you have deeply revolted. We cannot deny many of you have much of secular worth and excellence; but we deny that you have the least tint of sacredness. You are not demoralized out of all virtue, but you are desecrated out of all godliness; and we appeal to the distinctly felt current of your plans and purposes and desires, or we appeal to the familiar history of your every day, whether the will of God be the reigning principle of your mind, whether God can be said to have the rule over you.

Now Christianity is a restorative system. Its object is to reinstate the authority of God over the wills and consciences of men; and by this great and ascendant power of moral gravitation, again brought back to its influence over our heart, to reclaim our wandering species into that duteous conformity to Himself from which they have departed so widely. What he wants is to restore us to our wonted place among the goodly orbs of His own favoured and unfallen creation; and this He does simply by turning away ungodliness from our hearts. It is to set up that ancient and primeval law, by which the creature is bound to recognise the Creator in all his ways—so that instead of fluctuating as heretofore through the mazes of error and wilfulness and sin, he might walk with assured footsteps on that right and lofty path which is defined by Heaven's jurisprudence, and to which he is willingly constrained by Heaven's grace. And it is thought, that though godliness be a single principle out of the many which operate on the heart, yet that upon its re-establishment alone, there would instantly emanate a peace and a virtue that should be felt in all the departments of our nature. The benevolence would be stimulated, and the justice become greatly more strict and sensitive, and the temperance and purity be more guarded than ever, and the malignant propensities be kept in check and at last exterminated—and so all the secondary and earthly moralities, which may and do exist without godliness, attain by godliness a far brighter lustre and a far more effective and salutary ascendant over the character and interests of our species. Suppose a planet, that without the scope of the law of gravitation to the sun has deviated from its path, yet retains the principles which are at work throughout its mass and upon its surface; restore to it this single law which for a season has been suspended, and you do a great deal more than simply reclaim it to the old elliptic path in which it was wont to revolve. You impress and you vivify all the operations of the terrestrial mechanism; you call into force and action those tides which arouse the sluggish ocean out of its unwholesome stagnancy; and you set afloat through the air those refreshing currents by which its purity is upholden; and you pour abroad that beauteous element of light, which with its accompanying warmth both stimulates all the processes and discloses all the graces and the laws of the vegetable kingdom; and in a word, you—by this single restoration—turn the else desolate and unpeopled globe into a vast habitation of life and of enjoyment, where the notes of cheerfulness may be heard on every side, and where may be seen the works of busy design, the abodes of industry and comfort, the temples of piety.

Now it is the Spirit who evolved matter out of the chaotic state; and it is the Spirit who renews a living body out of the putrefaction into which it had mouldered; and it is the very same agent, even the Spirit of God, who renovates the heart of man, and forms him anew into righteousness and true holiness. It is a doctrine that is mightily nauseated in this our day—forming as it does one of the most offensive peculiarities of the gospel, and perhaps more fitted than any other to revolt into antipathy both the natural and the literary taste of those who hear of it. It is therefore the more desirable when anything can be alleged which may propitiate you in its favour. And surely, if you can be at all affected by the contrast between the loathsomeness of the grave and the gracefulness of a living form invested with the bloom and vigour of immortality, or between the turbulence of warring elements and that magnificent harmony of animate and inanimate things which has been made to emerge therefrom into our goodly world, this should enlist you altogether on the side of so beneficent an agency; and instead of that felt and invisible repugnance wherewith the doctrine of the Holy Ghost as our refiner and as our sanctifier is listened to by men, you should hail those informations of the Bible, by which you are given to understand that the same plastic energy which moved on the face of the waters at the beginning, and has since moulded the very dust into organism and living beauty—is also the principle of that new creation, which, out of ruined and distempered humanity, raises upon every true disciple of Jesus the worth and the excellence that fit him for immortality.

But better than all speculation on this topic would it be that you prized the operation of the Spirit on your heart, and that you earnestly and habitually prayed for it. The doctrine of the Holy Ghost is too much neglected in practice. It is not adverted to that all acceptable virtue in man is the product of a creating energy which is actually put forth upon him, and that it is his business to wrestle in supplication with Heaven that it may indeed be put forth upon himself. And this is the order in which the graces and embellishments of the new creature spring up in the believer. Ere God will pour them on his person, he must inquire after them. The Spirit of grace and supplication is generally given ere the things which it is your part to supplicate for are given. And therefore be not surprised at your miserable progress in sanctification, if a stranger to the habit of prayer. Wonder not and complain not that strength to help your infirmities is still withheld, if you have not mixed the prayer of faith with your severe yet ineffectual struggles against the power of corruption. Think not that you are to overcome, if with all the humbleness of a needy and dependent creature you do not look up to a power that is greater than your own, and if you give not the glory of all holiness in the creature to that high and heavenly influence which cometh down from the Creator. You have never yet known what the recipe is for making you virtuous, if to this hour you have been ignorant or inexperienced as to the efficacy of prayer. Though you should have tried everything else beside, you are still morally in a state of helpless and hopeless disease. And therefore, with all the eagerness of a patient who has been inquiring and experimenting for years about the right method of being healed, take yourself now to this prescription, and see whether a blessing will not come out of it. And, like those medicines which are of daily application, you should pray without ceasing. It should be a regimen of prayer. Earnest prayer and vigorous performance should be always alternating the one with the other. A good word with God in secret qualifies for a good work with man in society. And on the other hand, your deeds of righteousness with the hand will send back an influence upon the heart that shall brighten and inflame its sacredness. You will strive mightily, according to the grace of God that worketh in you mightily. The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead will dwell in you, if you make Him welcome; and prayer may be regarded as your invitation to Him—as the expression of your welcome. And the Spirit so dwelling will be indeed the earnest of your inheritance—He who quickens you from the death of trespasses and sins shall quicken your mortal bodies from that death of nature which comes upon all men.

Ver. 12.—'Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.'

The debtor is bound in certain duties or obligations to his creditor; and the Apostle here tells us, that we are not so bound to the flesh. It has its demands upon us, and it would fain exact our compliance with them; but this is a compliance which it is not incumbent upon us to render. We shall not, as I have often affirmed in your hearing, be released on this side of death from the hateful exposure of having to feel its instigations; but that is no reason why we should follow these instigations. We are subject here to the annoyance of being oft solicited by this tempter; but we are not therefore bound to yield ourselves up unto him. Living as we do in the flesh, we are at all times in contact with its near and besetting urgencies; but there is no such acquiescence due on our part, as that we should live after the flesh. This last is the debt wherefrom the text releases us—nay, in the next verse, the most forcible motive is presented to us why, instead of acquiescing, we should resist to the uttermost: 'For if we live after the flesh we shall die.' The motive in fact is as strong as that which Adam, who lived under the first covenant, had to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit: In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die. So that there cannot be a more gross misunderstanding of the gospel economy, than that it is destitute of as plain and direct and intelligible sanctions against moral evil as those which were devised for upholding the legal economy. Under both are we deterred from sin by the threatening of death; and the only difference between them is, that—whereas under the law one sin, however lenient in its character, or however strong and sudden the temptations were which hurried the unhappy victim onward to the commission of it, inferred the whole penalty—under the gospel, death is represented to be the effect as well as the penalty of such a character as has been formed in us by the habit of sinning, by the preference on our part of a carnal to a spiritual life, by a surrender of ourselves to the power of any evil affection—so that, instead of struggling against it and barring its ascendency over us, we permit the ascendency, and become the slaves of one against whom we should have fought with all the determination and hatred of honest enemies. This we must either do, or consent to live after the flesh; and against the latter alternative there is lifted under the dispensation of grace as clear and decisive a warning of terror as ever was lifted under the dispensation of works. We read in the book of Genesis how God said to Adam, 'In the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die.' And in this epistle to the Romans, in this most complete record of evangelical truth, and amongst all its rich promises of grace and pardon and remission from every legal consequence to believers, do we also read, that if we live after the flesh we shall as surely die.

But while there is this resemblance between the two dispensations, there is also a difference between them; and the difference might be illustrated by help of another text taken from the writings of Paul, and one of those very few in which there occurs the same term 'debtor.' He says of a judaizing Christian who insisted on the rite of circumcision as being essential to our acceptance with God, that if circumcised upon this ground he was a debtor to do the whole law; and that in the act of becoming so he would fall from grace, and cease in fact to have the privileges or the immunities of a believer. Now what is that to say, but that a Christian is not a debtor to do the whole law, and yet he is a debtor to live not after the flesh? He is not bound to the faultless obedience of a perfect commandment; and yet he is bound to a hearty and sustained warfare against all sin, which is a violation of the commandment. He is no longer under the economy of 'do *this* and live;' and yet he is under an economy, where if he give himself up to the doing of what is opposite to *this*, he shall most inevitably die. The truth is, that both the one economy and the other are on the side of moral righteousness; and both proceed alike on this undoubted position, that there can be no fellowship between God and iniquity, and that the heaven where He and His holy angels dwell, is a place where not a creature can find admittance who has upon him the slightest taint or remainder of evil. And thus the law condemned the sinner to exile from heaven; but after having done so it could not restore him thereunto. It had no provision within its limits by which it could either annul its own threatenings, or purge away from our now contaminated race that foul spiritual leprosy, the very existence of which, apart altogether from the consideration of legal penalties, barred the entrance of mankind from the habitations of unspotted sacredness. Under its continued administration we had no release from our past guilt, and no remedy from either our present or our future sinfulness; and in these vile bodies how was it possible to escape the necessity of perpetual additions to the account which was against us—since, in the high reckoning of a holy and heart-searching law, the very existence of an evil thought, the very inroad of a wrong or licentious imagination would be deemed and dealt with as the transgression of an offender? And therefore it was that this economy had to be suspended, and another set up with distinct principles and provisions of its own, which might render it competent for the sinner's restoration to that heaven which he had forfeited, and for admittance into which he both laboured under a legal and personal incapacity. There needed to be a skilful adaptation for purposes so very mysterious that angels are represented as looking on with the eye of eager and unappeased curiosity. And herein lay the profound, the unsearchable wisdom of the gospel, by which the guilt of the believer's sin was cancelled, and by which the existence of it upon his character is at length done away. He had to be saved by water and by blood. There is an atonement to do away the curse of sin, and there is a purification to do away its defilement. And thus, to complete our salvation, it was not enough that Christ bowed His head unto the sacrifice. When He rose again, He claimed, as the fruit of His obedience unto the death, the promise of His Father—the Holy Ghost given by Him to those who believe—

the power over heaven and earth by which He might subdue all things unto Himself; and more especially, by which He might aid the moral warfare that is going on among His disciples here below, and at length so change their vile bodies as that they might be fashioned like unto His glorious body—so that, delivered alike from the presence and penalty of sin, every barrier may be removed, and every hindrance may be done away to unexceptionable admittance within the limits of the sanctuary that is above.

Behold then the very nice adaptation to our state, as sinners, of that gospel economy whereby the legal economy has been suspended and superseded—because to our condition, as the wretched outcasts of a violated law, it brought no relief, and could bring no restoration. Under the former dispensation every sin, however trivial, and though urged to it by the besetting propensities of a constitution marred and vitiated since the fall, plunged us more hopelessly than ever in guilt and in moral helplessness. Under the present dispensation we are not without sin; but the sin of infirmity is not like the sin of wilfulness, unto death—and there has been a sacrifice provided in the faith of which if we make daily confession we shall have daily forgiveness. So long as we are in these accursed bodies it is impossible ever to venture off to any other foundation for our acceptance before God than the perfect righteousness of Christ; and the very sin of our nature has the effect to remind us of our dependence, and to keep us closely and tenaciously thereupon. But meanwhile, though vexed and annoyed by the instigations of the flesh, we are armed with a resolution and a strength and an affection for what is spiritual, that shall abundantly secure our not living after the flesh; and on the generous mind of the new-born Christian, the daily infirmities which he has to lay at the throne of grace, so far from working an indifference to moral righteousness, only shame and stimulate him the more to the vigorous prosecution of it. And the knowledge that though the infirmities of his flesh will be pardoned, yet that if he live after the flesh he shall die, this is to him as direct and urgent excitement as ever bore with practical effect on the legal aspirants after a reward and an acceptance of their own. And thus are the comfort after sin on the one hand, and the impulse to renewed holiness on the other, most admirably blended in such a way as best to suit those who are weighed down with a corrupt materialism, yet are furnished with power in the inner man to war against and at length to overcome it; and the disciple who is thus employed can, at one and the same time, draw comfort from the saying, that "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father"—and derive the energy of a practical impulse from the saying, that "If any man sin wilfully after that he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries."

LECTURE LIII.

ROMANS VIII. 13-15.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Ver. 13.—'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.'

And in like manner as the threatenings under the law and the gospel may be compared with each other, so may the promises or the rewards. By the former dispensation, he who fell into an act of disobedience was adjudged to die; and by the latter, he who by living after the flesh lived in a habit of disobedience was in like manner to die. It is well that we are liberated from the rigid and unbending economy of the law; for thus we are set free from the fears, and the scrupulosities, and in fact the utter and irretrievable despair, which would have paralysed the whole work of obedience. But it is also well, that while the economy of the gospel has achieved our deliverance from these, it still lifts as loud a testimony on the side of righteousness, and is actuated by as determined a hostility against all sin—so as to set all its honest disciples upon a most resolved and persevering opposition to it. Had law been the arbiter of this contest, they never, in the vile bodies wherewith they are encompassed, could have obtained the meed or the honour of victory—each error being an irrecoverable defeat—each infirmity being a death-blow to their cause. And therefore it is well that they now fight under the banners of another umpire, who can see, amid all the frailties of the old and the natural constitution, that there is rising and strengthening apace a force of moral resistance against the urgencies of corrupt nature, which is gradually undermining its ascendency, and at length will overthrow it. The man who has been endowed with this force from on high, is ever reminded by the frailties that are within of his daily need of Christ's propitiation, and would give up the battle in despair, had he not the righteousness of Christ to build upon. Yet he never forgets that the battle is his unceasing occupation—that the gospel which has discharged him from the penalties of a law that he is ever falling short of, has not discharged him from this warfare—that his business is so to strive against all the corruption which is in him as to make unceasing approximation to the purity and perfection of this very law; and that though now exempted from the threat, 'if ye fail in one jot or tittle thereof, ye shall die'—the threat is still against him and against all in full operation, that if, casting off the authority of the law, ye give yourselves up to your own heart's desire, or live after the flesh, ye shall die.

Now the like analogy and the like distinction may be observed in the promises or rewards of the gospel, when compared with those of the law. The apostle says of the law, that it is not of faith, but the man that doeth this shall live; and he saith in our text of him who hath embraced that gospel which supersedes the law, that if a man through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body he shall live. There is a doing to which death is annexed with as great certainty under the one economy as under the other. And there is also a doing to which life is annexed with as great certainty under the one economy as under the other. The 'do this and live' of the former dispensation, however, is a condition which has long been violated, and which in our present tainted materialism we never can attain unto; and which therefore, instead of indicating to us a practical avenue to heaven, is like a flaming sword that guards and bars in every way our access thereunto. The 'mortify the deeds of the body and live' of the latter dispensation is a condition again which might be rendered; which every believer in the grace and righteousness of the Lord Jesus will be enabled to perform; which from this moment we should set ourselves forward to for the purpose of making it good—and so exhibit in our history as direct a practical impulse taken from the hopes of the gospel, as any servant from the prospect of his wages, or any labourer under the covenant of works could take from the remunerations of the law. And in this warfare against the body, an advantage may sometimes have been gained by it, such an advantage as the law would have irretrievably condemned us for, and declared against us all the ruin and disgrace of a fatal overthrow; but such an advantage as under the gospel, though it has cast us down, yet will not destroy us—but, after perhaps a severe discipline of mortification and sorrow, will arm us with fresh resolution for the contest, and inspire into us a more cordial hatred than ever against the body of sin and all its sinful instigations, and give to the heart a more burning earnestness, that we may not only recover all the ground which we have lost, but may rise higher than ever above all the gross and terrestrial ingredients of our corrupt nature—till, having passed through a series of watchfulness and endurance and busy working, and so having made full proof of our discipleship, we can say with the apostle when the time of our departure is at hand, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me on that day; and not to me only, but also unto all such as love his appearing."

From the expression 'to mortify the deeds of the body,' I may here advert to that law of our moral constitution by which it is that if we refuse to perform a sinful deed we by that very refusal weaken the sinful desire which prompted it; and that thus by mortifying the deeds you mortify the desires. Every act of sinful indulgence arms with a new force of ascendency the sinful inclination. Every act of luxury makes you more the slave of the table than before. Every draught of the alluring beverage may bring you nearer to the condition of him who is the victim of a habitual intoxication. Every improper licence granted to the eye or the imagination, sinks you into more helpless captivity under their power. Every compliance with lawless appetite enthrones more firmly than before another oppressor, another tyrant over you. And therefore if you want to dethrone the appetite, refuse the indulgence; if you want to starve and enfeeble the desires of the inner man, mortify the deeds of the outer man. Begin in a plain way the work of reformation. And let it be the resolute purpose on which you shall put forth all the manhood of your soul, that however you may be solicited by the affections that are within to that which is evil, you shall not give the actions that are without to their hateful service—that however sin may have been desired sin shall not be done by you—that with the control which you have over the hand and the tongue and all the organs of the body, they shall with you not be the instruments of sin but the instruments of righteousness: And thus it is that the corrupt propensities of the heart, wearied out with resistance, and languishing under the constant experience of hopeless and fruitless solicitation, would at length weaken and expire. The body would be mortified; and the soul, delivered from its presence, and again translated into it after the last taint and remainder of its evil nature had been done away, would find itself in a perfect condition for the joys and the services of life everlasting.

But it is well to mark, that in order to make this mortifying of the deeds of the body effectual unto life it must be done through the Spirit. For the very same thing might in great measure be done without special grace from on high, in which case it hath no fruit in immortality. How many are the evil passions which can at least be restrained by the pure force of a natural determination. In the pursuits of fortune, or of ambition, or of war, what violence a man can put upon himself—what heroic self-denial he is capable of carrying into full operation—what a mastery he can reach over some of the most urgent inclinations of nature; and all this certainly without one particle of a sanctifying influence, but rather by the strength and power of one unrenewed principle lording it with a high ascendency over all the rest. To make then the mortification of your earthly desires available for heaven there must be an agency from the Holy Ghost—else there is nought of heaven's character in the work, and will be nought of heaven's reward to it. And if the Holy Ghost indeed be the agent, then He will not select a few of our carnal tendencies for extermination by His power, but He will enter into hostility with all of them; He will check the sensuality of our nature, and He will mortify its pride, and He will check its impetuous anger, and He will wean it from its now clinging avarice. Let it be your care then, from the very first moment of your strenuous resistance to these deeds and affections of evil—let it be your care, that, instead of trusting to the energy of your own firm and high-minded resolves, you invoke the constant supplies of aid from a higher quarter. Let yours be a life of prayer along with a life of performance; and then will you strive mightily, but according at the same time to the grace of God that worketh in you mightily.

Ver. 14.—'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

There is frequent cognisance taken in the Bible of the degrees in which the Spirit of God may operate on the heart of man. There is one work from which He ceases, because He will not always strive; and there is another work which after He hath begun He will carry on even unto perfection. There is a tasting of God's Spirit by those who afterwards fall away; and there is an anointing by God's Spirit, that remaineth. It is this which hath given room to the distinction made by theologians, between the saving and the ordinary influences of the Holy Ghost,—the former signifying those by which a man is effectually called unto the faith, and afterwards completed in the sanctification of the gospel; and the latter signifying those by which he is made to feel the stirrings of a conviction, and a desire and even a partial delight in many of the accompaniments of sacredness, which, had he improved them, would have been followed up with larger measures of grace and illumination—but which as he quenched them, do at length vanish into nothing, and leave him short of the kingdom of God. In these circumstances it were well if any definite or satisfactory mark could be assigned, by which to discriminate between the one set of influences and the other—by which to ascertain whether we have only so much of this heavenly influence as will suffice for condemning our resistance to it, or so much as will carry us forward to a meetness for the inheritance above—as will be effectual for salvation.

Now the verse before us supplies us with the test that is wanted. There are many who are solicited by the Spirit of God, yet who are not led by Him—many to whom the Spirit offers the guidance of His light and of His direction, but who refuse that guidance—many, we believe all, to whom the Holy Ghost hath made through conscience, that ear of the inner man, the intimations of His will, yet most of whom have not followed these intimations. They have been in so far then the subjects of the Spirit's operation as to have been perhaps in converse, and even occasionally in desirous and delighted converse with Him; but they have not given themselves up to His authoritative voice. They have been in so far enlightened by Him, yet not led by Him. The man who through all the strugglings of remorse at last gives way to the power of a temptation, has had light enough to forewarn him of sin, and light enough after it hath been committed to reprove himself and that most bitterly because of sin—and yet not power enough for the warfare of a successful resistance, so as not merely to feel what is right but to follow it. He therefore in this instance hath not mortified the deeds of his body; and if such be his habit he liveth after the flesh, and he shall die. It is not they who mourn over the sin that is practically and permanently indulged in, but it is they who mortify the sin that are led by the Spirit: And it is by this, as the consecutive tie which binds the last verse to the present one, that the reason is explained why they who mortify the deeds of the body shall live. They who do so are led by the Spirit; and they who are led by the Spirit are the sons of God—the heirs therefore of what their Father has to bestow, which is life everlasting.

The Scriptures often affirm a harmony between two positions, which the first and natural apprehensions of men would lead them to regard as opposed the one to the other. We are the children of God, says the apostle, by the faith that is in Christ Jesus. He is my brother and my sister, says Christ Himself, who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. It is through the redemption of the gospel wherein we obtain a part and interest by believing, that, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Galatians, we receive the adoption of sons. It is when through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body, that we are led by the Spirit, and, as he says in his Epistle to the Romans, are the sons of God. You will not be disturbed by the utterance of these propositions as if they were contradictory. You know in the first instance, that it is by faith, as by the hand of the mind, that you accept of the offered reconciliation. You know in the second instance, that it is by the hearing of faith, and not by the works of the law, that the Spirit cometh. You know in the third instance, that the Spirit which so cometh is a Spirit of might and good-will for all holy obedience—so through Him you are enabled to mortify the deeds of the body. And this last is not the cause why you are led by the Spirit of God, but the proof that you actually are led by Him—a proof which, if wanting, might still argue you to be in possession of His ordinary, but not in possession of His sanctifying, and therefore most assuredly not of His saving influences;—but a proof which having, is to you the best evidence that you are led by the Spirit, and have therefore received from God the seal of being one of His own children.

When you adopt one as a son, it is because you design for him an inheritance; and one can conceive something to be given as the token or the acknowledgment of his acquired right thereunto. In the act of hiring a servant, there is often a pledge given by the master; and this assures to the hireling his title to enter at the specified time upon his employment. Now by one being adopted as a son of God, there is the destination for him of a very splendid inheritance—even one of eternal glory in the heavens. But this is only entered upon at the term of death; and meanwhile, previous to that, there is a pledge or a token bestowed upon him, and this is the Spirit of God which is styled by way of eminence 'the promise of the Father,' and which, agreeably to the explanation which we have now given, is also termed 'the earnest of our inheritance.' This is that grace in time which is both the pledge and the preparation for glory in eternity; and the best evidence of which is, that enabled to mortify all those evil desires which would thwart the purposes of a holy obedience, you are thereby enabled to keep the commandments.

But there is a certain style of keeping the commandments which we fear is not indicative of this grace. It may be done in a scrupulous, fearful, and painstaking way, by one who is under the workings of a natural conscience, and perhaps a terror of everlasting damnation. In this too it is possible, that there may be a certain measure of success—the avoidance of much gross and presumptuous sin that might else have been indulged in—the penance of many sore and strenuous mortifications, so as that the body shall be starved, and in a good degree subjected, by the mere force as it were of a dogged and stiff determination; and so a kind of resolute sullenness in the whole aspect of the man's obedience, which certainly is of a different cast, and has upon it a wholly different complexion, from the gentleness and the grace and the good-will which characterize the services of an affectionate Christian. The truth is, that there might be a self-denial and a self-infliction which come through constraint—a drudgery which is rendered at the stern bidding of authority—a reluctant compliance to appease the dread or the troublesome remonstrances of the inner man—which fall altogether short—nay are altogether opposite to the temper of those who mortify the deeds of the body, but do it through the Spirit. What is done is done in their own spirit, which is the spirit of bondage; and not in that Spirit which cometh from above, and whereby we are made both to love the service and Him who enjoins it—to look upon God not as a task-master but as a friend, and so to execute His bidding with the alacrity of those whose meat and whose drink it is to do His will—to keep the commandments, not in the spirit of bondage which is unto fear, but in the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Ver. 15.—"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Had it been under a slavish terror that the work of mortification was gone into, this would have been no evidence of our filial relationship to God. It would have been the obedience of those that were lorded over, and not of those who were led as by the cords of love, as by the bands of a man. Henceforth ye are not servants or slaves, says Christ to His disciples, but ye are sons; and conformably to this, the spirit of sons is given unto them. And He appeals to the kind of spirit as being an argument for their being the sons of God—a spirit altogether diverse from that by which many are visited, under their first conviction of sin and of the soul and of eternity; who are pierced as by an arrow sticking fast, with an agonizing sense of their own guilt and of God's uncompromising authority; who are burdened under a feeling that the displeasure of Heaven is upon them; and whose conscience, all awake to the horrors of wrath and condemnation, never ceases to haunt them with the thought, that unless they can make good their escape from their present condition they are undone. Now, to make this good they will set up a thousand reformations; they will abandon all their wonted fellowships of iniquity; they will strenuously, and in the face of every temptation, adhere to all the honesties and sobrieties of human conduct; they will betake themselves to a life of punctuality and prayer; and moreover, graft upon their former habit the rigours of devoteeship, the austerities and the forms of Sabbath observation. Thus it is that they will seek for rest, but they will find none. The law will rise in its demands as they rise in their endeavours, and still keep ahead, with a kind of overmatching superiority to all their fruitless and fatiguing efforts of obedience. They will labour as in the very fire and not be satisfied; and all their vain attempts to reach the heights of perfection, and so to quell the remonstrances of a challenging and not yet appeased commandment, will be like the laborious ascent of him, who after having so wasted his strength that he can do no more, finds that a precipice still remains to be overcome—a mountain brow that scorns his enterprise, and threatens to overwhelm him. This has been the sad history of many a weary month with some on whom the terrors of the Lord have fallen heavy—God having looked at them, as He did upon the Egyptians, from a cloud, and troubled their spirits—giving them no rest, till they fall back again perhaps into the lethargy of despair, and take up with this world anew as their portion because they have failed in their attempts to secure a portion in the next world; or, if He had a purpose of mercy in this sore visitation of darkness and tempest and wrath, at length leading them to the alone Rock of confidence, and endearing the Physician still more to their breasts, in that they have been made to feel the disease in all its severity and all its wretchedness.

Now this spirit of bondage, which is unto fear, can be exchanged for the spirit of adoption only by our believing the gospel. Every legal attempt to extricate ourselves from the misery of the former spirit will only aggravate it the more; and we know of no other expedient by which the transition can be made, than simply by our putting faith in the testimony of the Son of God. We have laboured in vain to seek a righteousness of our own, wherewithal we might stand acceptably before God, because this is the wrong way of it. It is true that He will not look upon us without a righteousness, on the consideration of which it is that He deems it consistent with the honour of His government and the integrity of His character to take us into favour. But never—and on this point the gospel will enter into no compact whatever with the presumption of weak and guilty man—never will the act of friendship be firm and steady between him and his offended Lawgiver, in consideration of any righteousness of ours. And the distinct proposition is, that we shall look unto Christ as the alone ground of our acceptance before Him—unto His propitiation as that on which our hopes of pardon do rest, and unto His obedience in our stead and for our sakes as that on which we look for the rewards of eternity. Could I state the thing more explicitly, I would. It is in the form of bare and unqualified statement that the Bible lays it down; and all who give credence thereunto will find, that in no one instance will they ever be disappointed. It is this in fact which forms the grand characteristic peculiarity of our dispensation; it is the burden of those good tidings which constitute the gospel, and which operated instantaneously as tidings of great joy—because they were no sooner announced in some cases than they were credited—no sooner revealed than they were relied upon. This is the one and the direct stepping-stone by which you may enter even now into rest. The merit which you laboured to possess is already acquired; and what you seek to deserve is held out unto you in the shape of a free donation. There is a perfect righteousness already brought in, and you need not therefore go about to establish one. It will indeed be going about, if you try to establish a righteousness of your own. Many a fruitless round will you have to ply—many a vain and weary circuit to accomplish; and after all be no nearer to your object than at the point from which you departed—many a laborious drudgery, which will be nought but a laborious deviation from that plain and unerring path by which, with a majestic simplicity that is stamped upon all His processes, the wisdom of God would conduct you unto Himself. For this purpose hath He sent forth Christ unto you; and He bids you enter through Him into full repose and reconciliation—accrediting the testimony that regardeth His blood, and thus will you be washed from guilt—accrediting the testimony that regardeth His services in your room, and thus will you be sustained by God as the rightful heirs of a purchased and glorious immortality. Submit yourselves therefore unto this righteousness of God. Be assured that it is the grand specific for your case as a sinner; and that you will never, excepting upon this, get solid or legitimate rest to the sole of your foot. Your acceptance of Christ as He is offered to you in the gospel is the turning-point of your salvation. He is freely offered; and never will you cease to be haunted by the disquietudes of a heart that is not at ease—never will the jealousies of the legal temper be done away—never will you attempt an act of fellowship with God, without the flaw of some guilty and misgiving suspicions adhering to it—never will you know what it is to draw near in the freedom of perfect confidence, with every topic of disturbance and distrust hushed into oblivion betwixt you—till taking up with Him on His own terms, you cast the pride and the pain of self-righteousness alike away, and become the children of God through the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

I fear that there are many here present who could never allege of themselves at any time that they had the spirit of adoption; with whom the sense of God as their reconciled Father is as entirely a stranger to their heart as is any mystic inspiration; who have a kind of decent, and in some sort an earnest religiousness, but have never been visited by any feeling half so sanguine or ecstatic as this; and who perhaps may be interested to know by the footsteps of what distinct or intelligible process they could come to that filial affection unto God wherewith as yet they have had no familiarity whatever. I would therefore say in the first place, that I know of no more direct expedient for arriving at this end than that of giving earnest heed unto the word of the testimony. "Hearken diligently unto me," saith God, "and your souls shall live." Your ears are so accustomed to what may be called the mere verbiage of orthodoxy, that when sounded anew or another time in your hearing, it stirs up no fresh exercise of the thinking principle. You are so well acquainted with the terms that you arouse not yourselves to the contemplation of the truths. What you hear now you have heard again and again; and this deafens as it were the whole activity of your understanding—so that whilst you recognise the words of the evangelical system as so many old and oft-repeated commonplaces, you remain blind to all the important and affecting realities of which these words are nevertheless substantially the vehicles. In these circumstances I can give you no likelier advice than that you should put your minds forth and forward from the words to the things. Be not satisfied with the mere expression and cadence of orthodoxy. Engage, and that closely, steadily, perseveringly, with the matter of the gospel testimony. Think that there has been a movement in heaven towards a sinful world. Think that the express design of this movement was to recall as many of our alienated race as would to the joys and communions of that paradise from which they had been exiled. Think that for its accomplishment every barrier in the way of this return is lifted away; and more especially, that satisfaction was so rendered to a violated law, as that they who have trampled upon it might be crowned with honour, and yet the law itself be magnified and made honourable. Think that the whole burden of your guilt, and of its full expiation, has been laid upon another, and that all are invited, and you amongst the number, to come by this open way of access, and forthwith enter into peace with God. If in lifting up your eyes to this contemplation you still find that all above you is haze and all within you is heaviness, continue to look—continue to give heed even until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your heart; and when this wondrous transaction between heaven and earth at length unfolds itself to your mental eye, in its characters of bounty and truth and tenderness—when the spectacle of God willing and God waiting to be gracious is at length recognised by you—when all that moved His wrath and kept Him at a distance is seen to be put aside by the work of the great Mediator, and that nothing is left but the exhibition of a mercy now rejoicing in the midst of the other attributes, and pouring a fresh lustre on them all as it passes onwards to a guilty world through the channels of a consecrated priesthood and an infinite sacrifice; it is when thus enabled to see God disarmed of all His terrors, and instead of the inflexible Judge to behold Him as now reconciled through Christ Jesus—it is when this assurance is made directly to bear upon our spirits from the word of revelation that the confidence of our adoption enters into our hearts, and we can join the apostle and his converts in crying Abba, Father.

It does not follow, however, because you lift your eyes, that the manifestation is then in readiness for your first and earliest regards towards it. There may be a cloud which intercepts it from your view; and even after many a wishful look towards that quarter whence you expect the light and the comfort of divine truth to come down upon your soul, may you have to complain that you cannot believe, you cannot discern, neither is Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified before you. One advice of an eminent theologian in these circumstances, and it is a good one, is, that though you should have missed the object of which you are in quest a hundred times, you should still make the other and the other effort, and who knows but that next time you will be met with the very revelation which your soul longeth after? To this advice I would shortly add another. While busy in seeking after the development to your belief of Christ's work, be equally busy in your practice at the doing of Christ's will. Labour, though in the dark; mortify sin, though in such a spirit of unsettledness as to be almost equivalent to the spirit of bondage. Be diligent in duty, and thus may you pioneer your way to clearness and to comfort in doctrine. Forget not the saying that Christ manifests Himself to those who keep His words; and that they whose eye or whose aim is single shall have their whole body full of light; and that to him that hath more shall be given; and that he who wills to do the will of God, and proves the sincerity of his will by the vigour of his performance, shall be made to know of Christ's doctrine whether it is of God.

LECTURE LIV.

ROMANS VIII. 16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

We can well imagine the desirousness wherewith an earnest and aspiring Christian might enter upon the interpretation of this verse. For, at the first view of it, he might think that it so far outstrips his own personal experience as to leave him utterly behind all legitimate hope of his own personal salvation. He may be honestly conscious to himself that he hath never felt any such witnessing as the text seems at least to advert to; no secret and preternatural intimation of his being one of God's children; no inward communion going on between the Spirit of God and his own spirit, whereby he might assure himself of that test whereby the apostle and his converts assuredly knew that they were the heirs of coming glory; no whisper of this sort to the ear of the inner man; no feeling of any other principle that was active and astir in his own heart, save the thoughts, and the emotions, and the desires of his own busy and familiar self: and thus, on the perusal of this verse, and of those in St. John where the apostle speaks of the witness in himself, and of his positively knowing that God had taken up His abode and dwelt in him even by the Spirit which He had given him; why, there are many, who from the want of all finding and participation in this sort of experience, feel themselves thrown at an utter distance from that which ministered the high hopes of immortality to the Christian of the New Testament; and who seek in vain for that inscription on the tablet within which shone in characters of such bright and legible reflection to the primitive disciples, and assured them of their being indeed sealed unto the day of redemption, of their indeed having the mark impressed upon them of God's own family.

Now the first thing that I would say unto all who are in this state of painful ambiguity, is, that if they can obtain no satisfaction in their inquiry after the tests which they are looking for within, they ought to remember that these tests are come at in no other way than by a believing contemplation on their part of certain truths which they should often and habitually be looking to without. Even the Spirit; whose presence and whose inward witness they so vehemently desiderate, cometh by the hearing of faith. It was in the act of listening to the words spoken by Peter that the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and the members of his household. The word of God is the vehicle upon which this heavenly visitant maketh entrance into the heart; and the very first announcement that He gives of His presence is by the truths of that word impressed convincingly and feelingly upon the mind. This is the way in which He becometh sensible; and if you look for the Holy Ghost in any other way than through the power of Bible doctrine seen to be real, and felt to be morally touching and impressive, you will have no more success than if you looked for a spectre or some airy phantom of superstition. And therefore, if you will to realize upon your own person the test by which Paul knew of himself and his disciples that they were the children of God, begin at the beginning. Ere you look for that joy which is one fruit of the Spirit, look to the tidings by which you are made joyful. Ere you look for the peace which is another of His fruits, read the pacific message that came from heaven to earth; and you will cease from your disquietude, when you know that God hath ceased from His displeasure. Ere you make sure of love being in your hearts towards God, make sure of love being in His heart towards you; for it is only upon your believing sight of that love which looketh down from heaven, that a responding love will rise back again from the earth. We know not if the shepherds of Bethlehem became spiritual men. It is very likely that they did, and that the Holy Ghost took up His residence within them. But they first heard the voice from the sky, of Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good-will to men; and under all the doubts and perplexities of your various cogitations, do we also bid you attend to the import of the same voice—and it is in the attitude of a full outlook on the objects that you realize upon your own person the work and the consequences of faith. And therefore, in defect of experience, in defect of all feeling or confidence on your part that the Spirit is within you, in utter darkness though you may be on the question whether you are the subjects of grace, gaze upwardly and outwardly on the revealed objects of that economy of grace which hath been set up in the view of all—and that, from the uttermost ends of the earth all may look and be saved. Your first business is with the gospel. Your first attention should be to its overtures. They are the approach and the errand and the work of the great Mediator, which have a prior and a preferable claim upon you. What you have done once, you have to do always; and if ever a confidence sprung up in your bosom, when to Christ as a great Saviour, you brought yourself as an empty, unfurnished, and altogether helpless sinner, this you have to do again, and this beginning of your confidence you have to hold fast unto the end; and it is by a constant renewal of your affections at the fire of this spiritual altar that the flame of your spiritual grace can be so upheld as to be at all distinct or discernible.

And even when all discernment of your inward graces is lost, and nothing remains of which you are sensible but a desire after them—when utterly at a stand on the question whether you ever had the Spirit, or whether you still have it at this moment—you have a patent way by which to secure the attainment that your heart is set upon, if it be really so set. If there be nothing within to which you can look with any satisfaction, still you have God above standing forth in the aspect of graciousness, and waiting the applications of human willingness and human want. You have that Being to repair to, who hath pledged His truth to the promise, that He will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it. When in the chaos and confusion of the inner man all appearance of His workmanship hath disappeared, still you can pray; and just as the natural hunger ever recurring stands in need of constant and periodical supplies, so is it with our spiritual necessities. They are not met and conclusively provided for by one effusion of living water from on high. You perhaps have been counting upon a stock in hand, when in fact the style of this spiritual administration is of grace to help you in the time of need. And the felt time of your need is the fit time of your application. So that let you at present be as far aback as possible on the question of your having an unction from the Holy One, there are expedients between you and utter despondency. There is the direct act of faith on the truths of the gospel, by which the Spirit cometh. There is the exercise of prayer, in answer to which the Spirit is abundantly poured upon you.

Now how shall we verify the answer to this prayer? How shall we ascertain that upon us there has been the fulfilment of that promise which is unto faith—even the Holy Ghost who is given to as many as shall believe? In reply to this it is most important to observe, that His work is visible, but His working is not so. It is not of His operation that we are conscious, but of the result of that operation. We do not see the wind, though we see the impulse and the direction which it gives to many sensible things. And neither can we tell of the Spirit's agency on a human soul, though the impression which He hath made upon it may be quite palpable. We do not see Him at work, though we may see the workmanship that He leaves behind Him. As in vegetation our eye is upon the fruit, and not upon the secrets of that hidden physiology whence all the effloresence cometh; so, in spiritual husbandry, the eye of our consciousness is upon deeds that are palpably done and desires that are palpably felt, and not upon the primary influence which touches the inner mechanism and originates all its goings. There is much in that parable where the kingdom of heaven is likened unto seed thrown into the ground, and which springeth up one knoweth not how, but which still leaves the test unaffected that by its fruit ye shall know it. The Spirit may not be felt in His access to the soul, but His fruits may be recognised in the now holy and heavenly affections of the soul. There is neither a light, nor a voice, nor a felt stirring within, to warn us of His presence; but there may now be a goodness, and a righteousness, and a truth in the heart, which give testimony to His power. It is thus that from certain plain characteristics we may come at the inference that we are the children of God—from distinct and intelligible marks to which we have access without mysticism; and on which apostles have condescended in other parts of the New Testament: "Hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." "And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

There is one very obvious way, then, in which the Spirit may bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; or in which, according to the translation of many, the Spirit may bear witness to or attest to our spirit that we are God's children. It is He who worketh a work of grace in our souls, and that work may become manifest to our own consciences. We may read the lineaments of our now renovated character; and it may be regarded as an exercise of our own spirit, by which we become acquainted with the new features or the new characteristics that have been formed upon ourselves. And we may furthermore read in the Bible what may be the Scripture marks of the new creature; and as all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, this is one way in which a joint testimony may be made out between God's Spirit and our spirit upon the subject; or in which a communication may be made to pass from the one to the other, so that they both shall concur in one and the same sentence, that we are indeed God's children. The part that the Spirit of God hath had in this matter is, that He both graves upon us the lineaments of a living epistle of Christ Jesus, and tells us in the epistle of a written revelation what these lineaments are. The part which our own spirit has is, that with the eye of consciousness we read what is in ourselves; and with the eye of the understanding we read what is in the book of God's testimony: And upon our perceiving that such as the marks of grace which we find to be within, such are the marks of grace which we observe in the description of that word without, which the Spirit hath indited, we arrive at the conclusion that we are born of God.

But what is more, it is the work of the Spirit to make one see more clearly in both of these directions—to open our eyes both that we might behold the things contained in the Bible with brighter manifestation, and also that we might behold the things that lie deeply and to most of us undiscoverably hidden within the arcana of our own hearts. In virtue of his clearer outward discernment, a man may have a more sure and satisfying belief in the Son of God; and in virtue of his clearer inward discernment, this belief, now more sure and strong, may also become more sensible. There are many natural truths in authentic history, in science, in common life and experience, which you not only believe, but which you know that you believe—so that you cannot only say of them that these are truths, but of which you can say, I know the firmness and the certainty of my own faith in them. In like manner, a man may both believe in a gospel truth, and, which is a distinct thing, may know that he believes it. The Spirit may have so far enlightened him as to the doctrine, that he is quite satisfied as to the truth of it; and may also have so far enlightened him as to the state of his own mind, that he knows the belief or the conviction to be assuredly there. Let him have no doubt upon this point;

and on the single assertion that he who believeth in Christ shall be saved, he may have no doubt of his salvation. If he know himself to be a believer, and also knoweth that every believer shall go to heaven, what more is necessary to assure him of his own destination to an inheritance of glory? He hath data enough for such a conclusion. He hath both the major and the minor proposition for the winding up of an argument which to him at least is irresistible. Still it is the Spirit which hath furnished him with both. By it he discerns the evidence that there is in the Bible, and by it he discerns the reflection that there is of that evidence in his own heart; so that he not only recognises the Bible to be true, but recognises himself to be a believer in the Bible. The one recognition in fact may be so clear and confident and strong, as to lead instantaneously and forcibly to the other. And thus believing in the Son of God, may he come to have the witness in himself, and assuredly to know that he is one of God's children.

No man can know anything, or believe anything, but upon evidence. Yet this evidence may be of such prompt occurrence to him when he goes in quest of it, and it may work its convictions upon the mind so quickly and so powerfully, and with all the rapidity of consciousness may so hasten on the argument—that, as the Bible is true, and he is thoroughly aware of his own belief in it, therefore to him all its promises are sure, and all its glorious prospects are unquestionably in reserve for him: And this sunshine of hope may come so immediately on the back of prayer, or be so lighted up at the view of a scriptural passage, or be so supported by all the regards that he is enabled to throw on his past history or on his present feelings, as not only to assure him of the sufficiency of all these proofs of his personal interest in the gospel, but also that it is the Spirit of God who at the moment hath assembled them in such force and frequency and radiance around him; not an intimation from that Spirit either by a voice or a direct impulse, but an intimation rationally gathered from those materials of contemplation which it is the office of the Spirit to set before him—gathered from that written record, to understand which the Holy Ghost hath opened his understanding—gathered from what he knows of his own believing heart, to perceive which the Holy Ghost hath enlightened his conscience—gathered from the retrospect of his bygone experience, for the perusal of which the Holy Ghost hath performed the office that belongs to Him, of bringing all things to his remembrance: And thus through the medium, not of visionary but most significant and substantial proofs, yet proofs brought together in a way that announces the preternatural agency concerned in the representation of them, may the Spirit of God witness to the spirit of man that he is a child of mercy, and that the seal of his redemption is set upon him.

I could not, without making my own doctrine outstrip my own experience, vouch for any other intimation of the Spirit of God, than that which He gives in the act of making the word of God clear unto you, and the state of your own heart clear unto you. From the one you draw what are its promises, from the other what are your own personal characteristics; and the application of the first to the second may conduct to a most legitimate argument, that you personally are one of the saved—and that not a tardy or elaborate argument either, but with an evidence quick and powerful as the light of intuition. By a single deposition of conscience, for example, I may know that I do indeed hunger and thirst after righteousness; and by a single glance with the eye of my understanding, I may recognise a Saviour's truth and a Saviour's tenderness in the promise that all who do so shall be filled; and without the intervention of any lengthened process of reasoning, I may confidently give to this general announcement in the gospel such a specific application to myself, as to carry my own distinct and assured hope of a particular interest therein. Thus there is no whisper by the Spirit, distinct from the testimony of the word. Thus there is no irradiation, but that whereby the mind is enabled to look reflexly and with rational discernment upon itself. And hence there is no conclusion, but what comes immediately and irresistibly out of premisses which are clear to me, while they lie hid in deepest obscurity from other men; and all this you will observe with the rapidity of thought—by a flight of steps so few, as to be got over in an instant of time—by a train of considerations strictly logical, while the mind that enjoys and is impressed with all this light is not sensible of any logic—and yet withal by the Spirit of God; for it is He who hath brought the word nigh, and given it weight and significancy to my understanding; and it is He who hath manifested to me the thoughts and intents of my own heart, and evinced some personal characteristic within that is coincident with the promise without; and it is He who sustains me in the work of making a firm and confident application. In all this He utters no voice. The word of God made plain to my conviction, and His own work upon me made plain to my conscience—these are the vocables, and I do imagine the only vocables, by which He expresses Himself; but enough to furnish any Christian with a reason of the hope that is in him, and better than articulation itself, to solace and to satisfy the inquiring spirit of its relationship to the family of God.

Mine eye can carry me no farther among these experimental processes—these hidden mysteries of the Christian life—these lofty eminences of grace and of attainment, which, high and inaccessible as they may appear to many who are here present, have nevertheless been reached and realized by believers in this world. And would you like to realize them? Are you convinced that there is much of recorded experience in the Bible, and even much of actual and yet occurring experience among the Christians of the day, which overshoots all that you have ever felt or become familiar with in the intimacies of your own bosom? Would you like personally to taste of this experience, to ascertain, and upon your own finding, what sort of thing, after all, it is really to have to do with these witnessings of the Spirit—these communications of light and love from the upper sanctuary—these foretastes of a coming blessedness—these ecstacies that almost look like so many inspirations, of which you read in the lives of the holy, but which belong it would seem to a more elevated region of faith or of fancy than you have yet soared into? We hold it to be no fancy. We deem that such a region exists, and we also deem that there is a series of firm stepping-stones by which it may be gained. We have already spoken, and at the outset of these remarks, of the direct exercise of faith in the gospel; and we now say, that, up to your faith in the doctrine, let your diligent following be of the duties of the gospel. The manifestations for which you long are given to those who do the commandments of Christ. You desire to reach the assurance of so bright and joyful an anticipation as the apostle expresses in our text. It is to be reached by a path of labour, and so he says in another place—"Labour with all diligence unto the full assurance of hope unto the end." It is not by a flight of imagination that you gain the ascents of spiritual experience. It is by the toils and the watchings and the painstakings of a solid obedience. Performance alone will not do it—for performance unsanctified by prayer is a legal and a presumptuous offering. Prayer alone will not do it—for prayer unaccompanied with performance is an idle or a hypocritical effusion. But prayer and performance together will do it. What looks now a secret and inaccessible thing, will then become familiar; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. What now looks dark and deep and wholly undiscernible, will then become manifest; for to him that ordereth his conversation aright will God show His covenant. There is a working to establish a righteousness of your own that will land you in utter disappointment and defeat; but there is also a working which is taken up with a looking unto Christ as the Lord your righteousness, that brings down upon your soul the illuminations which He is ever ready to bestow on His faithful followers; and which He delights in showering down upon them from His seat of exaltation—as the tokens of His love to all those who evince the sincerity of their love to Him, in the keeping of His commandments.

LECTURE LV.

ROMANS VIII. 17, 18.

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

'And if children, then heirs.' The one implies relationship to God, the other a right of property from Him; differing from the corresponding right in society in this, that for one man to be the heir of another, implies a right to that which the other possesses, upon his relinquishing it by death. It too is a right in reversion; but which, instead of entering upon at the death of another, its possessor enters upon at his own death. And he is an heir of God, not because at that period he succeeds Him, but because at that period he is admitted by Him into the full enjoyment of Himself; nay, into as full a participation as his limited faculties will allow, of the very joys and the very characteristics of the Godhead. He then enters on the glory that is to be revealed, and he is then filled with the whole fulness of God. St. John felt himself unable to enter into the details of what that is which the children of God shall be, but still he could say in the general that we shall be like Him. He knew of himself and of his fellow-disciples that they were the sons of God, and exclaims on the manner of love wherewith God had loved them, in that they should be so called; and then he seems to pass from their relationship as sons, of which he spake with present certainty, to their relationship as heirs, of which he could only speak distantly and dimly—yet speaks in such a way as makes out a very apposite conception of our property in God; for what can give us a nearer use and enjoyment of the Deity, than we have by actually seeing Him as He is, and so gazing with unexpended delight on all those lovely and venerable graces by which He is irradiated; and what comes nearer to a communication of Himself unto us, or to our having a portion in the Divinity, than our being made like unto Him? It would look too as if the circumstance of our seeing Him, led by a sort of causal or influential energy to the circumstance of our being assimilated to Him—as if we gathered by a sort of radiation from His glory, the reflection of a kindred glory upon our own persons—as if His excellences passed into us when ushered into His visible presence, and became ours by sympathy or ours by transmission. He does not part with His character; but He multiplies His character by the diffusion of it through all the members of the blest household that is above; and they may most significantly be called heirs of God—may be most significantly said to have God for their portion, and God for their inheritance, when not only admitted to the full and immediate sight of Him, but when the efficacy of that sight is to actuate and inspire them with His very affections, to cover and adorn them with His very moral and spiritual glories.

'Heirs of God.' This phrase brings us to the same conclusion as that in which we have often been landed by the consideration of other phrases and other passages of the Bible, in regard to the kind of happiness that is to be enjoyed in heaven. To be filled with the fulness of God, is to have a full view of Him as He is; and not merely a full view of His character, but a full participation of it. This is the inheritance that we have to look forward to. An heir hath something in prospect, and something in reversion; and this is our prospect. There is a glory to be revealed, and of which we shall be admitted as the beholders; and not only the beholders but also the sharers of it. Our eye will be direct on the manifested Godhead; and in the act of looking to Him we shall be made like unto Him. We shall imbibe the very character that we gaze upon; and not only shall we have unspotted moral excellence in full and faultless perfection before us, but we shall have all that inherent delight which springs from the ample possession of it; so that, after all, it is not the happiness of sense, but mainly and substantially the happiness of sacredness. It is the very kind of happiness wherein God hath dwelt from everlasting; and in which He had supreme and ineffable enjoyment before the world was. It is that happiness to which the viewless Spirit of the Eternal is competent; and which lay profoundly seated in the depths of His incomprehensible nature ere there was any sensible delight to be tasted or any sensible beauty to gaze upon. He was happy in the contemplation of His own virtues; and this is a happiness that we are made to inherit, when, admitted into His presence, these virtues stand in illuminated glory before us. And He was happy in the complacent possession of these virtues—in the harmony within to which they ever attune the bosom of their serene and abiding occupation—in the deep and capacious peacefulness wherewith they pervaded the very essence of the Divinity—in that fulness of joy whereof purity and righteousness and love are the sole but the sufficient elements. This happiness too we are made to inherit, when the character of God is not only set before us in radiant perspective, but is made ours in real and actual possession—when all His moralities take up their dwelling-place in our own souls, and have over them entire and absolute dominion—when, in the ethereal play of our kind and holy and heavenly affections, we shall have pleasure for evermore—when ours shall be the blessedness that essentially resides in every well-conditioned and well-constituted spirit; and opposed to all that turbulence and misery, which wrath and malice and deceit and the fierceness of unhallowed desire are ever stirring in the heart which they agitate and possess, there will be a well of living water in the soul, the play of a celestial fountain that yields to the feelings a perpetual refreshment; and which, apart from all external gratification, can minister the choicest sweets of elysium from the deep and inward complacencies of rectitude alone. And then there is the sympathy of all this conscious feeling between soul and soul; there is the diffusion of God's own likeness over all the individuals of heaven's family; there is the moral radiance that issues from His throne, and is reflected back again from the countenance of all the worshippers who are around it; there is the law of kindness, that emanates from the central place of glory, and circulates throughout the mighty hosts both of the redeemed and the unfallen;—these are the properties of that divine inheritance whereunto we are called—these are the beatitudes to which, as the heirs of God, we are invited to look forward; and though we do believe of the paradise above, that it will be lighted up in material splendour, and have all the hues and graces of material loveliness scattered over it in rich and infinite profusion, yet will it be in the healthful temperament of spirits, in the action of mind upon mind, in the worth and the beneficence, and the piety, that are inwardly felt by each, and spread abroad in one tide of joyful communication among all—it will be in these that the happiness of immortals shall essentially lie. It will be a moral and a spiritual gladness that shall hold jubilee there; and the high and heaven-born festivities that are there enjoyed will be characteristic, not of a place of sense, but of a place of sacredness.

And this should hold out a lesson to all who are pressing forward to acquire, or who do now entertain the hopes of the gospel. It is a hope which should lead directly unto holiness. The son, who is also heir, receives upon his spirit an impression and a tinge from the nature of his inheritance. If it be an inheritance of wealth, he may now be busied with all the plans, and have entered in some degree upon the habits of expenditure. If it be the inheritance of an official dignity, he even now rises upward in thought to the measure of the elevation that awaits him. If it be a place of duty, and where eloquence or scholarship or high philosophy are indispensable, then will he give himself up to the toils of an unseen but busy solitude, to the labours of the midnight oil in the work of preparation. And so if it be a place of holy delights and holy exercises, will there even now be a foretaste of the coming joy, and a preparation for the coming services. The expectants of heaven will even now be of heavenly character and heavenly conversation. There will be a mortification unto the present, there will be an engrossment with the concerns of the future. The urgencies of sense will be resisted, because they are not the delights of sense which are to constitute the portion of their eternity. The high communions of sacredness will be aspired after, because it is a habitation of sacredness whither they are going. The Spirit of holiness that is in them here will be the earnest to them of a holy inheritance hereafter. They will know themselves to be strangers and pilgrims; and their affections will be kindred with the country to which they travel, and not with the country through which they pass. They will sit loose to this world's cares and this world's pleasures; and thus a patience under all earthly discomforts, and a self-denial to all earthly gratifications, will be to them the discipline that shall at once inspire the hope and qualify for the enjoyment of higher gratifications.

'Joint-heirs with Christ.' The term 'son' implies only a relationship. The term 'heir' implies something more—a right to something in reversion, and on which we are afterwards to enter. The heir hath a title to the inheritance; and joint-heirs have a joint or common title thereunto. We who believe in Christ have a common title with Christ to the inheritance that is above. It is a title by us possessed, but by Him purchased. It is called a purchased inheritance, because a price was given for it—a ransom or a redemption-price, whereby the title that we had forfeited is again made up to us—a right that we share along with Him who earned it—and of which it is most material that you should know that by Him it was altogether bought, and to us it is altogether rendered in the form of a present. There is not a greater stumblingblock in the way of our entrance upon the divine life than the legal imagination that we often set out with—of making good as our claim that which is freely offered to us as a gratuity. We either never shall be satisfied with the goodness of such a claim, and so be all along haunted by a most oppressive sense of insecurity; or, if we are satisfied, it is only by dishonouring God—by bringing down His law to the measure of our loyalty—by an affronting comparison between the lofty commandment of Heaven and our unworthy and polluted services. And accordingly, this is a point on which the gospel will stoop to no compromise whatever with human guilt. It makes you welcome to heaven, but not through the works of righteousness that you have done; and if you persist to make this the footing on which you rest your hopes of immortality, this it denounces as a presumption on your part which it resents to the uttermost, and for which it has no toleration. You must take the gift of eternal life, if you are to obtain it at all, on the footing of that mercy which hath saved us; and of mercy, too, that not satisfied with giving it as a simple donation, gives it conjoined with all the securities of a title-deed and of a legal investiture. It is given to you in consideration of a righteousness, and that not your own but the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and you altogether defeat the economy of the gospel, and miss the very spirit which it is designed to impress upon sinners if you hold not by your hopes of a coming inheritance on the terms that to you it is freely given, because by Him it has been amply earned.

But though we had no part with Christ in the purchase of that inheritance which belongs jointly to Him and to us, yet there is one thing that is common betwixt us. He alone achieved the purchase. He trode the wine-press alone; and when He saw that there was none to help, His own arm brought Him salvation. But whilst there is no similarity between Him and us as to the fulfilment of that righteousness by which heaven is purchased, there is a similarity as to the fulfilment of that righteousness by which heaven is prepared for. It was He who reared the pathway of communication between earth and heaven; but He not only reared it, He also walked upon it, and we have to follow His steps. For this purpose He was set forth as an example; and to make it an applicable and an imitable one, He assumed such a humanity as felt the power of temptation, though He overcame it—as was tried by sufferings, and was actually schooled into perfection thereby—as was exercised by affliction in such a way as to be taught by it, and from it to learn obedience. We have nought but revelation to guide us through the mysteries of a nature that none but He ever realized; yet it was a nature so conformable to ours, as that we could make a study and a copy of it; and accordingly we are told by the apostle in his epistle to the Hebrews that the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings—that by the things which He did suffer he learned obedience—that He became qualified by this process of discipline to make our sufferings the instruments of our sanctification, even as His sufferings were the instruments, as we are expressly told, of His sanctification—that both He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are in this respect one—that from the like contests of trials here there is the like crown of triumph hereafter—and that He hath not only pointed out this way by describing it before us, but hath been enabled thereby to help us over all its difficulties; for "to him that overcometh," He says, "will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne."

'If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together'—or 'seeing that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.' There is this difference, you will perceive, of import between the two phrases, 'if so be that,' and 'seeing that.' By the former phrase the present suffering is made the essential condition of our future glory. By the latter phrase the present suffering is recognised as that which hath actually happened; and the future glory as that in which it will most assuredly terminate. And though we would not say of sufferings in time that they are indispensable to the triumphs of eternity—yet certain it is that the one is often made the stepping-stone to the other. Certain it is that in point of fact they are the instruments of a salutary discipline for the growth and establishment of a believer in holiness. They not only go before our glory in heaven, but it is expressly said that they work out that glory: "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The chastisements of God yield, it is said, the peaceable fruit of righteousness; and they are inflicted for the express purpose of making us partakers of His own holiness. "It is good for me," says the Psalmist, "that I have been afflicted; ere I was afflicted, I went astray." And it is very remarkable that the Saviour who assumed the person, and put on the infirmities, and became subject to the temptations of a man; that He also exemplified the very processes by which humanity is purified and exalted unto a meetness for the celestial habitations; that He, of whom we might well imagine that He had nothing to learn, actually learned obedience by the things which He suffered; that He, of whom no one could think that any imperfection adhered to Him, actually became perfect through suffering; that He, whose natural manhood was carried forward from infancy in a way analogous to the rest of the species, seems to have grown to His moral and spiritual manhood in the same way, being cradled among the elements of suffering and pain, being tutored in the school of adversity, being tried and at length established in virtue under the lessons of this severe teacher; so becoming, in all points, with the single exception of sin, like as we are, not only feeling as we ought to feel and acting as we ought to act, but learning as we ought to learn.

I have had occasion formerly to explain in your hearing the beneficial efficacy of an afflictive process—how it emptied the heart of an idol that had seduced or withdrawn us too much from God—how it loosened the tie by which man is so often bound to the vanities of a perishable world—how, by rending asunder the connexion that there formerly was between our affections and certain earthly objects by which these affections were secularized, it left the soul more clear and unoccupied for the things of God and eternity—how, additionally to all this, it tried our faith and patience, and by the very trial strengthened them the more—how it in a manner compelled us upon our resources in heaven, to make up for crosses and deficiencies on earth; and in so doing brought us into closer contact and made us have more abundant conversation there—so, in a word, as to confirm our attitude of strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and habituate us to the frame of those who, looking forward to another resting-place, sit loose to the world and to all its treacherous enjoyments.

And it would greatly lighten the burden of our afflictions did we but lay our account with them—did we regard them as forming a necessary part of our lot—did we, forewarned of their frequency, stand in the attitude of readiness, and prepared to receive them. It would serve to repress the murmurs of our impatience, and reconcile us to the hardships of life, did we look on life as a journey whose hardships must be traversed; and that they in fact were the steps of that laborious ascent which led to the higher scenes of a sinless and unsuffering kingdom. There is nought which more aggravates the pain of affliction than the thought that we have been singled out for calamities which are but rarely exemplified in the world; and one of the most familiar effusions of discontent is—"Never was man so beset and tormented and cruelly agonized both by misfortune and injustice as I have been." To meet this tendency the apostle makes use of many arguments. He tells us that our afflictions are not rare—"Think not that any strange thing hath happened unto you," and that others experience the same. "There has nought befallen you that is not common to the rest of your brethren in the world," and it is not so great as might easily be imagined—"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;" and, lastly, afflictions are useful in the great work of our spiritual education. Be reconciled, therefore, and patient. You do not know what others suffer as well as you. The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and each believer hath his own appropriate visitation laid upon him by the God who chastens because He loves, and who conforms us to Christ in suffering because He means that we shall be conformed unto Him in glory.

Ver. 18.—'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

This is a testimony which cometh well from the apostle Paul, who was so singularly afflicted in his day; who stood at all times in imminent peril of his life, from the unrelenting enemies of that faith which he so steadfastly adhered to; who, in addition to fightings from without, had fears and forebodings within; and whose spirit, made the subject of constant agitation and turmoil both from his misgivings as to the success of his ministry and from that deep and tender sensibility of conscience which rendered him so alive to his own weakness, was well-nigh wearied into utter despondency—so that he longed to depart from the world, and to be with Christ, which he deemed far better. Such a testimony from a man of so much experience in the sufferings of life should be prized by the sufferers of after ages—even as the record of that grace and mercy which were bestowed upon him, a sinful persecutor, should be prized by the sinners of all after ages. It is a signal exhibition of the power of faith, proving that with him immortality was somewhat more than a dream —that it was embodied into a practical reality, and had the same substantial influence to console him in the dark and trying hour of adversity, as the near prospect of deliverance even in this world. The man who frets impatiently under the little crosses and disasters of our passing day—who abandons himself to despair when his visions of prosperity on this side of time are scattered by the hand of misfortune into nothing—who feels that all is lost, because the earthly portion upon which he set his heart is lost—who, differently reckoning from Paul, reckons himself an outcast from hope and happiness because of the clouds that sit on this temporary scene; he may try himself by these marks, and learn how little indeed it is that he lives by the power of a coming world—learn how, after all, when his faith is brought to a really practical test, it is found most wofully to fail him—and more especially learn, how possible it is to have quite the form of sound words, and to have all the notions and phrases of the evangelical system, without being impregnated with that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

LECTURE LVI.

ROMANS VIII. 19-22.

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Ver. 19-21.—'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

To understand these verses let it first be adverted to, that the term here translated 'creature' signifieth also creation; and so might comprehend all animate and all inanimate things. It is true that the inanimate are not capable of hope; and this feeling perhaps should not be extended beyond the members of the human family; though certain it is, that amongst the inferior tribes of living creatures there is also in some partial degree the same restlessness, the same dissatisfaction with present things, the same desire of things better, and perhaps even the same tendency of wish and expectation towards them, that are so palpably evident in ourselves and all the fellows of our species. And then of mute and insensible things it holdeth true, that though they cannot hope, they at least wait a restoration. We cannot ascribe to them, without an effort of poetry or of personification, the posture of looking forward to that day of their coming enlargement when they shall be emancipated from the distress and imprisonment in which they are now held; but still when we include them in the description of these verses, we commit no greater violence upon the literalities of the sober and prosaical than is done in other parts of Scripture—when all nature is summoned to an act of attendance upon God—when the voice of praise is heard by the ear of fancy as arising to heaven from the mountains and the forests, and the valleys are made to sing, and the little hills on every side to rejoice—when on the approach of its Maker the whole creation is represented as vocal—when the fields are called upon to break forth into gladness, and the floods to clap their hands. These are all now waiting such an advent and such a jubilee as this; and there is no great stretch of the imagination, when the apostle affirms that they all now hope for a futurity, at which when it becomes present the Psalmist figures them to rejoice.

The next remark that we shall offer for the elucidation of these verses is, that the middle clause of the 20th verse should be thrown into a parenthesis. The main assertion of this verse is, that the creature was made subject to vanity in hope; and we are told, by the way, that it was so made subject unwillingly, or without its own consent. It was not, for example, by any wilful act of theirs that animals were made subject to death. There could be no willingness on the part of the ground, in that act of which its curse was one of the consequences. It could be from no fault of the will in nature that she was visited with that sore distemper under which she now labours, and whereof she giveth palpable symptom in the volcano, and the earthquake, and the storm, and that general conspiracy of all her elements against which man has to fight and to fatigue himself his whole life long—that he may force out a subsistence and keep footing through a history that is made up of little better than to drudge and to die.* It was not of its own willingness that the creation was thus brought under the power of vanity, but by reason of him who subjected the same. There are some who understand this of the great tempter, who, by seducing man from his obedience, brought death into the world and all our wo. Others understand it of him who yielded to that temptation, our first parent, at whose fall a universal blight came upon nature, and she became a wreck of what she was—still lovely in many of her aspects, though in sore distress—still majestic and venerable, though a venerable ruin—appearing as if out of joint; and giving token by her extended deserts, and the gloom of her unpeopled solitudes, and her wintry frown, and her many fierce and fitful agitations, that some mysterious ailment hath befallen her.

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* A few of the following passages had been transferred twelve years ago, from the author's MS. Lectures on the Romans to his preparations on Natural Theology, and have since been printed from p. 389 onward of vol. ii. of his work on that subject. Nevertheless they are still retained here though in a different connexion; and to ourselves at least it is interesting to feel, that the same process of reflection which suits the dimness of nature anterior to the light of Christianity, is alike suitable to our present state, while we yet see through a glass darkly, and anterior to the disclosures of our future immortality.

So that the whole passage may be thus paraphrased. The creation is now waiting, as if in the attitude of earnest expectancy, for that era, when, transformed into a new heavens and a new earth, it shall become a suitable habitation for those who are declared and manifested to be the sons of God. For creation, then to be so gloriously restored, has for a time been made subject to vanity, not willingly, on the part at least of any who now live, but by reason of him who by his fatal disobedience hath brought it into this bondage—yet is it a bondage that is mingled and alleviated with hope; and that too a warranted hope, because creation shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption: And emancipated from those fetters which now bind and burden and make it impracticable and ungracious, it will come forth in smiles that shall be perennial and immortal, it will yield a grateful compliance to the wishes of its happy inmates, and have in all its operations the beneficent flow and freedom of God's own children.

Having rendered to you a general exposition of this remarkable passage, let us now look a little more narrowly into the separate clauses of it.

'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.' We have already hinted at the extension of this clause even to the lower animals, and to mute insensible things. There might be somewhat of personification and fancy in such an application; but there is no fancy in generalizing it so far as to include at least all the members of the great human family. There is a sort of vague undefinable impression, we think, upon all spirits, of some great evolution of the present system under which we live—some looking towards, as well as longing after immortality—some mysterious but yet powerful sense within every heart, of the present as a state of confinement and thraldom; and that yet a day of light and largeness and liberty is coming. We cannot imagine of unbelievers that they have any very precise or perhaps confident anticipation on the subject, any more than the world at large had of the advent of our Messiah—though a very general expectation was abroad of the approaching arrival of some great personage upon earth. And in like manner there is abroad even now the dim and the distant vision of another advent, of a brighter and a blander period that is now obscurely seen or guessed at through the gloom by which humanity is encompassed—a kind of floating anticipation, suggested perhaps by the experimental feeling that there is now the straitness of an oppressed and limited condition; and that we are still among the toils, and the difficulties, and the struggles, of an embryo state of existence. It is altogether worthy of remark, and illustrative of our text, that in like manner as through the various countries of the world there is a very wide impression of a primeval condition of virtue and blessedness from which we have fallen; so there seems a very wide expectation of the species being at length restored to the same health and harmony and loveliness as before. The vision of a golden age at some remote period of antiquity is not unaccompanied with the vision of a yet splendid and general revival of all things. Even apart from revelation there floats before the world's eye the brilliant perspective of this earth being at length covered with a righteous and regenerated family. This is a topic on which even philosophy has its fascinating dreams; and there are philanthropists in our day who disown Christianity, yet are urged forward to enterprise by the power and the pleasure of an anticipation so beautiful. They do not think of death. They only think of the moral and political glories of a renovated world, and of these glories as unfading. It is an immortality after all that they are picturing. While they look on that gospel as a fable, which brought life and immortality to light, still they find that the whole capacity of their spirit is not filled, unless they can regale them with the prospect of an immortality of their own. Nothing short of this will satisfy them; and whether you look to those who speculate on the perfectibility of mankind, or those who think that in economic theories they are laying the basis on which might be reared the permanent happiness of nations—you see but the creature spurning at the narrowness of its present condition, and waiting in earnest expectancy for the manifestation of the sons of God.

'For the creature was made subject to vanity.' We have already spoken somewhat of the inanimate creation; of the curse under which the ground lieth, and the consequent toil to which man is subjected that he may live; of the visible derangement into which nature has been thrown, so that all her elements are impregnated with disease, and often by hurricane or pestilence or sweeping flood become the ministers of desolation. We do not know how much lovelier the face of creation would have stood out to the eye, had not sin entered within its confines. We do not know what tints of sweeter beauty had diversified the landscape, or with what finer notes of melody and peace the purer and fresher atmosphere had been charged. It is not for us to tell the precise amount of deterioration which the mute and unconscious materialism hath sustained by the fall of Adam. But certain it is, that vanity hath thereby obtained a sad ascendant over everything that lives on the surface of our lower world. It was by sin that death entered amongst us; and this stamps the character of vanity of vanities on all who are subject to it. Through the whole of life doth man walk in a vain show, and he vexeth himself in vain; and even though it had flowed in one clear and untroubled current of felicity, how surely and how sadly it reacheth its termination. It is this which puts a mockery on all the splendour and stateliness of this world. The grave absorbs all and annihilates all; and as one generation maketh room for another, and the men of the present age are borne off the scene by the men of the age that is to follow, we cannot regard the history of our species, and indeed of all the living tribes that people the surface of this labouring earth—we cannot regard it in any other light than as a series of abortions. There is so much of the promise of immortality in the high anticipation and heyday of youth; there is so much of the seeming power of immortality in the vigour of established manhood; there is even so much of the character of endurance in the tenacity wherewith age keeps itself riveted to the pursuits and interests of the world, to its busy schemes, and its eager prosecutions, and its castles of fame or accumulated fortune—clinging, as it does, to these things on the very brink of the sepulchre; and keeping the firmer hold with the hand of avarice, the sooner that its deeds and its documents and its various parchments of security are to be torn away from it: Why, the whole picture looks so farcical, if I may be allowed the term, that surely it may well be said of life under its happiest guise, and in midst of its greatest prosperity, that it is altogether subject unto vanity.

'Not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same.' This as I said before is a parenthesis, by which the main current of observation is suspended. Yet here it comes most pertinently in. This is a condition which hath passed upon it by the sentence of the Creator, not gone into with the consent of the creature. It is a thing of ordination, not of choice. The mute and inanimate things had no choice of that derangement which they have been made to undergo, of that decay under which so many of them, and these the loveliest in nature, do yearly sicken and expire; and so exemplify a death that likens them to those who are immediately above themselves in the scale of creation. Neither had the inferior animals any voluntary part in that law of mortality whereunto they are subject, or in that law of their sentient or organic nature by which, in obedience to a tyrant appetite, they go forth upon each other in mutual fierceness to raven and to destroy. And even with man it is a thing of destiny, and he comes into the world all unconscious of that which is awaiting him. What does an infant know of death? or what does it know of those restless passions by which, ere death ensues, the period that intervenes is a troubled dream of vexation and vanity? They lie unevolved and sleep in mysterious embryo among the curious receptacles of its little bosom. If this subjection of our world unto vanity is resolvable into willingness at all, it must be either the willingness of that great adversary who plied the first and fatal temptation, or it must be the willingness of those first parents who yielded to it. And it is indeed a most striking demonstration of the malignity of sin, and of God's unfaltering hostility against it—that, on its first entrance within the confines of our planet and ever since, Nature took on a hue of sickliness; and the very elements were charged with disease; and even that ground, which erst offered a soft and flowery carpet for the impress of ethereal footsteps, gathered into a more rugged and intractable temper than before; and death established its grim relentless empire over everything that breathes; and more especially man has been doomed by the very nobleness of his endowments, by the greater reach of his forebodings and the finer sensibilities that belong to him, to a larger participation, to a higher pre-eminence in the general distress.

'In hope.' Take away the parenthesis, and you read 'Vanity in hope'—or an experience of present evil mixed with the anticipation of release from it. In the condition of the accursed angels, there is evil unmixed and unalleviated. We can imagine it, but we do not feel it. We deem that in every clime and with every human creature, there is, it may be dimly and faintly, but there is we think a sort of restless aspiring towards better things, which could not exist without a certain prospect of enlargement. There is a constitutional impulse in the human spirit, by which it is ever stretching forward to a better and a happier condition than the one which it now occupies; and if it can find no earthly prospect on which to rest, still the tendency abides with us; and goads us on as it were to unknown futurity, which we fill with wishes and schemes and fond imaginations, rather than that a faculty within should lie unemployed, or a feeling should continue to actuate our hearts that shall be left without an object to exercise and entertain it. We cannot fancy a situation of greater wretchedness than that from which hope is excluded, and before which there lies no open vista whatever that admits one ray of light from the fathomless unknown; or rather perhaps when it is all known to be the cheerless infinite of one vast and unknown desolation—when grim certainty informs the conscience, that what the present void and the present agony are now, such will they ever be—when the weight that is now upon the spirit is surely believed by the owner of it to be irremediably there; and there is ever ringing in his ear the unvaried knell of a ceaseless and changeless and comfortless eternity. Such may be the sad estate of those apostate spirits that have fallen before us; but it is not ours. The vanity to which we are subject is mingled with hope; and it bears a kind of experimental evidence to that economy under which we live, that the prospects which it sets before us are so adapted to principles which God hath still permitted to remain in our nature. It shows that there is a counterpart within us to the doctrine that is without us. It secures a more ready coalescence on our part with the revelation of immortality. It gives to that revelation the advantage of being met with and responded to, in a way that it could not so promptly and immediately have been, had there not been such an adaptation between the mechanism of our spirits and the matter that is addressed to them. It secures it, that we shall spring forth with more alacrity and desire to that message by which our futurity is unfolded; and however misdirected this tendency of our nature, either on the part of those who have a false mythology and a fabled elysium, or on the part of those who without religion at all have still a philanthropy that urges them forward in pursuit of an earthly elysium that after the lapse of generations they conceive to be waiting our species—still they are better subjects for being plied with the doctrine of a true revelation, than if they had no such tendency.

That there is this tendency, and a strong one too, even without and beyond the limits of Christianity, is quite obvious. The very thirst after immortal fame, on the part of orators and philosophers and poets, is an exemplification of it; and so are the magnificent sketches of a prouder and better day for our species, that float before the eye of our sanguine economists; and so is every effort to shake off the trammels of antiquity, and to speed if possible with an innovator's hand, the amelioration of our race; and so are those lovely visions of a world regenerated into benevolence and purity and peace, that certain uninspired prophets love to gaze upon. Each has a millennium of his own on which he doats and dwells with kindred imagination; and whether you read of the future triumphs of virtue by the progress of light, or are called to look upon it in the perspective of planned and regulated villages—put it all down to the craving appetite, or even to the strong expectancy that there is in human bosoms, for some bright and beauteous evolution in the history of human affairs.

There is a prophetic announcement of such an era, or what is stronger still, a habitual advertence to it on the part of many prophets and apostles and evangelists. This is a topic on which Christians feel that they have a warrant for very noble and high anticipations. The gospel throws open to the eye of faith a vista that terminates in a better day of glory and of rejoicing which shall fill the whole earth; and with this peculiarity which is all its own,—that while it points the eye to this moral scene, it puts into the hand that specific instrument by which it is to be realized. It is through that ministry by which the world is reconciled that it shall at length be regenerated. It is on acceptance of the message of peace that a purifying influence is to descend from the sanctuary; and, in very proportion as the word of faith circulates and finds admittance with the species, will the work of renovation take effect upon them. And amid all the ridicule which is incurred by those who put their trust in the operation of a preached gospel, we at this very day have witnessed the samples of its efficacy. And surely it is not for us, who know the wonders of missionary success, who within the compass of our own evanescent memory have seen the transition of a whole people from the grossness of heathenism to the light and love of Christianity—it is not for us to give up as hopeless the cause of this world's amelioration.

Ver. 21.—'Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

'Because' is capable from the original language of being rendered into 'that'—in which case the passage would run thus—'For the creature was made subject to vanity, in hope that the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.'—We prefer however the present translation. It is not true that all have the specific hope of a deliverance in the terms of the verse—though all I think have a kind of longing and indefinite hope—a vague anticipation of a better and a higher existence that awaiteth them—a fond imagining of future bliss; not confined to the mythologies or the faiths of the old world, but felt even by the Indians of the new—mixing itself with their feasts and their battles and their war-songs, and descending with something like the power of inspiration upon their hearts. We would not however just say of these wild and untaught children of Nature, that they hoped specifically for the glorious liberty of the children of God — though we should say, that because such a liberty is awaiting us, therefore there is a general hopefulness of some enlargement or other among all the members of the human family. There is a marvellous adaptation between the truths of the gospel and the constitutional tendencies of those to whom it is addressed. There are counterparts in revelation to every feeling and every faculty of nature. There is something in it suited to our fears and our wishes and also to our hopes; and in all that is said of the millennium and the latter-day glory, do we recognise a tallying accordancy with an expectation, which, however it may have originated, is in some shape or other very widely diffused throughout the world.

But let it be your care, my brethren, to have a hope more precise and practical than this—a hope that looks forward to the prospects, and is founded on the promises of the gospel—a hope of enlargement certainly, but such an enlargement as even now it is competent for you at least to enter upon though not fully to expatiate in it. What the liberty is we may infer from what the bondage is. It is the bondage of corruption from which you are to be delivered; or in other words, it is the liberty of a will free from the tyranny of evil desires into which you are to be translated. It is a moral and spiritual liberty to which you look—a release from the servitude of sin, from the power and the prevalency of those base and earth-born affections which war against the soul. Now let me apprise you, that to obtain this release the soul must now put forth all the energy that is in it, and forthwith embark on a war against them. If you permit them to be your tyrants in time, they will be your tormentors throughout eternity. Here the victory will not be complete, but here the battle must be begun; and it is only to him who overcometh in the conflicts of grace that the crown of glory is given. The hope of the gospel is not a floating and vague and aerial speculation, which is merely addressed to the contemplative faculties, and over which a man may luxuriate in a sort of indolent elysium of the fancy; it is a hope that turns immediately to a practical account, and if real will urge forward, and that immediately, in a practical direction. The hope of unspotted holiness in heaven leads to the toils and the trials and the purifications of holiness upon earth. This is the life on which a man enters, and that in good earnest and in a real spirit of business, on the moment that his mind is taken possession of by a true faith in the gospel. It is when we know the truth that the truth makes us free. It is when we look to the fulness of that propitiation which was made for the sins of the world, and feel how under its blessed operation all sense of guilt and of reckoning is made to disappear from the conscience —it is then that we are loosed from the bond of despair, and can see that there is a hope in the new obedience of the gospel. And it is then too that we are visited with trust, while before there was terror—that we are visited with a delight in those ways to which before there were distaste and antipathy—that we are visited with gratitude to Him who before was lightly esteemed by us—and that, under the impulse of this gratitude, we enter with alacrity and good-will on that new path, which by His example and His precepts He hath pointed out to us. You have no part nor lot in these things, if you are not so bestirring yourselves.

Ver. 22.—'For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.'

It may be thought by some that there is a little too much the character of fancy in our previous remarks, for the solid and simple instruction of those to whom they are addressed. And yet you find that the evangelical Paul,—he who was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, he who gloried to preach the gospel in the face of the oppositions of vain philosophy and of science falsely so called,—you find of him that he casts a widely speculative eye over the whole creation, which in this verse he represents as groaning and travailing in pain. It is quite obvious that he here extends the range of his contemplations beyond the limits of the Christian Church properly so called. In the next verse he expressly singles out believers, whom he represents also as in the agony of a yet unfulfilled expectation. Not only they—that is Nature at large—not only they but we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit do groan inwardly. So that in this the present verse he is indulging himself with a very ample perspective; he is taking a distant outlook beyond the precincts of the consecrated territory; he is roaming abroad as it were, and with generalized survey, over the whole expanse of animate and inanimate things; he counts not this passing but sublime and comprehensive regard unworthy of a place in the page of inspiration. And accordingly, set and shrined as it were in an epistle the most replete of them all with the very strictest peculiarities of the theological creed, do you find an image more striking, I am sure, and more descriptive of a universal character, that takes in the whole compass of nature in all its varieties, that any which I have ventured to bring forward—the creation in a state of big and general distress, giving token of some pregnant but yet undisclosed mystery wherewith it is charged, and heaving throughout all its borders with the pains and the portents of its coming regeneration.

This is the aspect which our present system of things bore to the eyes of the apostle, and it is its aspect still. The world is not at ease. The element in which it floats is far from being of a tranquil or a rejoicing character. It has somehow gone out of adjustment, and is evidently off the poise or the balance of those equable movements in which we should desire that it persisted for ever. Like the stray member of a serene and blissful family, it has turned into a wayward, comfortless, ill-conditioned thing, that still teems however with the recollection of its high original, and wildly gleams and gladdens in the hope of its future restoration. It hath all the character now of being in a transition state; and with all those symptoms of restlessness about it which a brooding insect undergoes ere it pass into the death-like chrysalis, and come forth again in some gay and beauteous expansion on the fields of our illumined atmosphere. Meanwhile it is in sore labour; and the tempest's sigh, and the meteor's flash, and not more the elemental war than the conflict and the agony that are upon all spirits—the vexing care, and the heated enterprise, and the fierce emulation, and the battle-cry that both rings among the inferior tribes throughout the amplitudes of unpeopled nature and that breaks as loudly upon the ear from the shock of civilized men—above everything the death, the sweeping irresistible death, which makes such havoc among all the ranks of animated nature, and carries off as with a flood its successive generations—these are the now overhanging evils of a world that has departed from its God.

LECTURE LVII.

ROMANS VIII. 23-25.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

Ver. 23.—'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.'

It is the turn of expression here, the introduction of 'even we ourselves'—as additional to and apart from all that he had asserted before, in regard to the intense and even painful expectancy of nature for its coming enlargement—it is this which, more than aught else, convinces us of the amplitude that there is in the apostle's contemplations; and we are satisfied that we only follow in his track when we affirm of creation at large the agony and the suspense and the brooding anticipations that we have ascribed to the general species, and have even extended in some sense to the irrational creatures, nay to mute and inanimate things. The apostle seems to pass from this wider speculation to the present state of his own limited society—to draw himself in as it were from the world to the Church, which he represents as in like manner labouring. Even with them too there is a present drawback from that full and final blessedness that awaits them—there is hope far more specific and sure than that which floats and dazzles so indistinctly upon the vague imagination of those who are without; but still it is a hope subject to the deduction while they remain in the world, of a remaining vanity—there is an evident composition of two ingredients, one of them the Spirit, whereof they have received already the first-fruits, but the other of them a vile body that is still in a bondage from which it has not yet been fully redeemed or emancipated—insomuch, that under a sense of its thwarting and oppressive presence, there is the feeling, and even the exclamation of a sore agony. The reader will not fail to recognise in this passage the very lamentation that is uttered elsewhere, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Our life at present is "hid with Christ in God; and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." "Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." It is when thus clothed upon that "our vile bodies are changed and fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ."

These passages all harmonize in the account they give of the present state of believers in our world. In spite of the enlargement they have gotten, it is still a state of durance. They have not yet had the Spirit without measure, but only the first-fruits of it. They have not yet been delivered from the presence of an evil nature. It is only overruled, not exterminated. It is only under watch and under warfare, yet not stript of its power to fatigue and to annoy. The life of a Christian differs as much from that of another man, as the smart of the wounds that are inflicted in a battle for freedom differs from the smart of the wounds that are inflicted upon captives or slaves by the lash of an overseer. But then it also differs as much from that which it will be as the strenuousness and hazard and agony of the day of conflict differ from the rest that is enjoyed, and the triumphs which are felt, and the music that is lifted up, and the smiles of gratulation and high contentment that are exchanged from one happy countenance to another on the day of victory. There is no respite from the warfare on this side of death. A large supply and manifestation of God's Spirit will not even secure it to us; for while it arms with new power against the enemy within, it also endues us with new and powerful sensibility to the now diminished but still more hated remainders of evil than before. So that the final release will not be enjoyed till death, and even then perhaps it will amount to little more than rest from our labours. The final triumph will not be till the resurrection, when the body shall again be called forth from the tenement in which it long hath mouldered; and the corrupt principle shall by the mysterious transformation of the grave be fully disengaged from it; and that framework, every vestige of which was before obliterated, shall put on its ancient form, but be thoroughly freed of that moral virus which now so thoroughly and so intimately pervades it; and its reappearance from the land of its present captivity will indeed be to it a redemption of joy—achieved by Him who, in giving up His own body, gave up the price of their glorious immortality in behalf of all who believe on Him.

You perceive how it is, by the very nature of the case, that there can be no deliverance to the Christian from the agony of a conflict, and from a sense of soreness and heaviness and discomfort, on this side of death. For there passeth no such transformation upon his body as to change it from the state and character of being a vile body—for it so remaineth till the departure of the last breath from it. The whole of what the New Testament describes as the old man, or the carnal man, is alive even unto the moment of our earthly dissolution—enfeebled no doubt by the habit of frequent thwarting and mortification to which it hath been subjected—kept more effectually under, in proportion to the growth and energy of the rival principle, which is fostered by prayer, and strengthened by exercise, and placed after every new victory on the vantage-ground of a higher ascendency than before over all the rebellious appetites of our ungodly and accursed nature. Yet in spite of all this prosperity there is a felt annoyance; and one to which the mind becomes more painfully and sensibly alive as it advances into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints. For if a disciple be making genuine progress—then, along with the triumph which bears him up on the one hand, there is a tenderness that keeps him down on the other; and that because of the remaining evil which still lurks and lingers in his moral constitution, less than before, but better seen than before—of a milder taint, but now looked at with a purer eye, now reflected on with a deeper humiliation. There is thus a burden upon his spirit which the world cannot sympathize with; and a deeper groaning within, even while to all without the graces of his character are brightening into a more vivid lustre than before—a greater annoyance from one quarter, along with a greater hope and satisfaction from another, and that because his self-acquaintance is growing, and his sensibility is growing: And thus it is that he longs more earnestly as he proceeds, for the entire repose of perfect godliness and purity and love—for a thorough extinction from his moral system of all that evil by which it is still pervaded, and is the more offensive to him just as he becomes more ethereal and heavenly than before—for a final relief from the last dregs of that vitiated nature, which still hangs about him and troubles him with its hateful presence—insomuch that the purest and the saintliest of men have been known to weep upon their deathbed for that still adhering corruption which they felt to be most dishonouring to God, and most disquieting to their own souls.

Such being the state of matters, Christians have not yet come to the inheritance of perfect virtue. They are only waiting for it. They now bend forward in the attitude of expectants. They have already got the first-fruits of the Spirit; and this serves at least as an earnest. But they are far from thinking that they have yet attained. St. Paul thought so much otherwise, that he counted his acquisitions to be as yet nothing; and such is the infinite distance between a saint on earth and a saint in heaven, that the former, so far from having any adequate share of the perfection and the glory to which the latter is elevated, has not even an adequate imagination of them. He sees it, but by a medium of such exceeding dimness, that he is said to see it through a glass darkly. He knows himself to be one of the children of God; but he knows not yet what he shall be—what the whole amount of blessedness and of perfection is which belongs to that exalted relationship, and to which when he is preferred he receiveth what may substantially and in the full significancy of the term be called his adoption. It is then that the most signal mark of this relation to God is conferred upon him; and this is what in the text he is represented as now waiting for. This adoption is followed up by a short explanatory clause, which maketh known what it is that it consists in—to wit, the redemption of the body. It is brought back from the land of its captivity. It is called forth again out of the grave into which it had entered, where perhaps ages before it had been deposited as a natural body, but whence it now ariseth a spiritual body. And the redemption which it then undergoes is an everlasting redemption. Death shall no more have the dominion over it. It will become immortal; but this is not the whole of its coming glory. It will also be immaculate. It will furnish no element to thwart or to impede the movements of a righteous spirit; and by which it is that the whole man of a believer upon earth is kept in a state of controversy. From its then regenerated mould there shall have been ejected, and that conclusively, both the seeds of mortality and the seeds of moral evil. The death which our first parent entailed, and the corruption which he entailed, shall be alike put forth of that materialism wherewith the spirit of man is forthwith to be encompassed, and in which he is to be equipped for the services of eternity. It is saying much for what that is which essentially constitutes heaven, when it is said here to consist in the redemption of the body. It is in truth the jar, and the dissonance, and the maladjustment with all that a righteous spirit aspires after in the way of moral excellence—it is this which now distempers our world, and it is this, aggravated and universal, which will give its fiercest agonies to the accursed in the place of condemnation. And on the other hand, it is a total exemption from the carnal and the corrupt ingredient; it is the harmony of a system all whose parts are in unison, and all on the side of purest virtue; it is the scope that will then be for the doings and the desires of holiness, when the body shall lay no weight as now upon the willingness of the spirit,—this is the redemption for which believers are waiting here, and the hope of which upholds them in their struggle with all the perversities of our earthly nature—it is this of which they have now the dim and distant perspective, and which when realized will constitute the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Ver. 24, 25.—'For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'

In the whole of this passage it seems the drift of the apostle to reconcile those whom he addresses to their present sufferings—and that not merely to the persecutions which they had to sustain from without, but to the perplexities and spiritual misgivings whereby they were agitated within; and the main cause of which, in the aspiring bosom of every honest Christian, is a sense of his own exceeding shortness from the high standard of gospel obedience. What he desiderates and longs after is to be saved from the deadness and carnality of his own earthly nature; and the apostle meets this anxiety by telling him that the actual economy of salvation is not so constituted, as to bring to those who are its objects the fulness of an immediate possession, but as to hold this out to them as a thing in reserve, as a thing in distant anticipation. We are saved by, or rather we are saved in hope. Christians in this world are maintained in a sort of analogy to the general state of the world, which has already been affirmed as a mixture between present vanity and future expectation. If we look for a full and finished salvation now, we look for that which the gospel gives us no warrant to count upon. The condition in which it places us here is one of expectancy, and not of attainment. The salvation that it hath brought is not one which we have now, but one which we hope to have afterwards. We are in the wrong if we give way to heaviness because we are not yet fully inducted into the spiritual privileges and immunities of heaven. It is not so arranged by Him who had the ordering of this whole administration of grace. By the very constitution of it what we aspire after and are in heaviness because we have not yet reached, is ours only in prospect and not in possession. This ought to satisfy our disquietudes. It is an argument for patience. The dispensation under which we sit is not one of sight but one of hope. This hope is the essential characteristic of it, which would in fact be expunged were the full and finished reward a thing of presence and not a thing of futurity. It would cease to be a matter of hope if it were a matter of vision—for hope that is seen is not hope, for what we see we do not hope for—what is in possession is no longer in prospect. Seeing then that such is the economy of the gospel, that it is so framed as to place its consummation not beside us but in a distant futurity before us, let us conform ourselves thereunto; let us sit down and be satisfied with hope instead of perfect happiness in the meantime; let us wait for the coming glory and wait for it with patience.

But though the phrase admits of the translation that we are saved *in* hope, intimating thereby the simple truth that salvation is in the main a thing of expectancy while we live in the world; yet though we should adhere to the present translation of our being saved *by* hope, and thereby ascribe to this principle a kind of efficacy in bringing about our salvation, we should not on that account traverse any of those principles that are unfolded in the New Testament. There is indeed a very close alliance stated throughout the evangelical writings between the hope of a Christian and his salvation. There is a hope that is instantly awakened by the faith of the gospel; and it is often reiterated upon us that by faith we are saved. I cannot conceive a man really to believe even in the general announcements of the gospel, without appropriating to himself the comfort wherewith they are charged, and which is addressed unto all—for while addressed unto all, they are at the same time, as I have often affirmed, pointed specifically unto each: Nor can I think of any honest inquirer after salvation, that he shall read believingly such a statement as that "whosoever cometh unto Christ shall not be cast out," or such an invitation as "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," or such a widely-sounding call as "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved,"—I cannot think of faith in any of these apart from the hope, the individual hope and trust, they are fitted to awaken; so that the affirmation of being saved by hope is about tantamount to the saying that by faith you are justified. But this of being justified is far from being the whole of salvation. The term includes a great deal more than our being saved from wrath; it signifies further our being saved from the power of sin: as in that passage where it is said that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. And that we are so saved by hope, that by this principle we are sanctified as well as justified, is directly affirmed by St. John, when he tells us that he who hath the hope of seeing God and being like unto God purifieth himself even as God is pure.

To understand how it is that hope should operate in this way, we have just to reflect what that really is to which a genuine believer looketh forward. It is not to a paradise of sensuality, else he might revel as nature would incline him among its delights and gratifications. It is to a paradise of sacredness; and we hold it morally impossible that a man should dwell with fond anticipation on such a destiny, without a taste and temper of sacredness. The man who prefers what is earthly to what is heavenly, will turn away his face from the better country, and from the road that leads to it; and in reference to it there will be no belief, no hope, no kindred aspiration. With such a preference he withholds all attention as well as all desire from the futurities of another world; and, wholly immersed in the cares or joys of the present one, he lives without faith, and he dies with the burden of this condemnation upon him, that "he loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil." It has been defined of hope that it is a compound of desire and expectation; and no man can desire such a heaven as that which is represented in the New Testament, without the work of holiness being begun in him. Were it merely a heaven of animal enjoyments, or a heaven that rang with melody, or a heaven that was lighted up with variegated splendours, or even a heaven of science, where the understanding was feasted with truth even unto ecstasy—then one might have the hope of such a heaven without being moralized by it. But when it is a heaven whose essential characteristic is that it is a place of holiness, when it is a heaven defined in the book of Psalms as the land of uprightness, and described in the book of Revelation as that eternal city where the servants of God do serve Him—then it is not in truth or in nature, that one should look forward with complacency to his entrance upon such a heaven, without a growing conformity in his character here to that which he believes, and rejoices to believe, shall be his condition hereafter. He cannot look with pleased expectancy to such a place, without gathering the radiance of its virtues upon his soul; and if, amid the crosses and fatigues of a treacherous world, this be habitually the hope by which he is sustained—then, as surely as by any law of his moral or sentient constitution, this also is the hope by which he will be sanctified.

Before quitting this subject, let me simply advert to a cause that serves very much to aggravate the struggle of a Christian here below, and to expose him to a still more acute sense than he might otherwise have had, of that deadness and deficiency from the spiritual life, under which even Paul and his converts are represented as groaning inwardly. What I allude to, though perhaps it looks like a digression from the main subject of these remarks to allude to it at all, is the way in which an aspiring Christian must be weighed down, as to all his holy and heaven-born tendencies—by the engrossments of business—by the multitude of hours that he consumes every day among the attentions and labours of a pursuit along which he never meets with any one of the influences of sacredness—by the exhaustion in which this lands him on each recurring evening—and by the call that he feels to lie upon him, of giving the first and earliest vigour after his necessary repose to the very toils that so spent and secularized him yesterday. To a man who has been visited with any unction upon his soul from the upper sanctuary, I cannot figure a heavier burden or a sorer discomfort than this; and just as we have thought it right occasionally, even from the pulpit, to protest against the keen and busy and almost gambling adventure of an overtrading age—so would we protest against that total absorption of spirit, that overwhelming load upon all its faculties, that utter alienation from better things, which must ever accrue from an undue and overdriven employment. The two evils work in fact to one another's hands. The man who trades beyond the compass of his means, gives himself more to do than he can well overtake; and so has to labour at the desk of his counting-house, or to bustle among markets, or to run to and fro among customers and correspondents at a distance, beyond the compass of his time or his physical strength—and so, in the neglect of all spiritual cultivation, his heart becomes a wilderness, and his family ceases to profit by his instructions or his example, and Christianity goes to utter waste on a mind thus overrun with the cares and the keen ambitions of a perishable world, and the good seed of the word of God is choked and overborne—and all from what? from the temptation that he has given way to of extending, and that to undue dimensions, a business that, within safe and moderate limits, might have yielded him a quiet and comfortable passage through this land of vanity. There never was so cruel a sacrifice as this—of all the snugness and tranquillity that he might have perpetuated, in the character of a thriving, well-conditioned, though withal perhaps a plain and unambitious citizen—had he only not ventured himself on the high and slippery places of daring speculation; and given up his domestic evenings, and his unbroken Sabbaths, and the perennial contentment that used to flow within his bosom, and his simple gratifications, and all the quiet opportunities that, within the shelter of an humbler but happier sphere, he would have enjoyed for communion with a present God and the preparations for a future eternity. Be assured that there is a limit which ought to be laid on the number and extent of the services that are rendered to the great divinity of the place. The commerce of the world cannot be pushed beyond a certain barrier; and the share that each individual takes of it cannot be so pushed without either the ruin of his fortune, or at all events the utter ruin of a mind wholly given over to a most deceiving and a most dangerous idolatry. Take pity on yourselves. Take pity on your clerks and journeymen and apprentices. Offer not the encroachment of one moment upon their Sabbaths; and be careful even through the week, lest they be drudged and worn out of all energy for a far nobler service and a far higher interest than your own. There is nought for which I more admire the Bible than the experimental sagacity wherewith it pronounces on all the habits and temptations and characteristics of human life in each of its varieties — a sagacity that might still be recognised even in modern days; and though the apostle had lived in our city, and spent years in the capacity of a student or a spectator of the exhibitions of our nature that he found in it, he could not have more happily described the wretchedness and the folly of extreme mercantile ambition, than in this passage to Timothy— "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

LECTURE LVIII.

ROMANS VIII. 26, 27.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Ver. 26.—'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

It would appear from the first clause of this verse, that the great subject of labour and sore anxiety to Christians, and under which they groan inwardly, is their deficiency from holiness; and the great subject of their hope, is the perfect holiness that awaits them in heaven. But, additionally to this expectation of the future, the apostle also tells us here that there is partly a deliverance at present—a foretaste of that which they are looking forward to; and from the nature of the foretaste, we may infer the nature of the anticipation. Now the benefit that they have in possession is help against their infirmities; and so the benefit which they have in prospect is that these infirmities shall be utterly and conclusively done away. In other words, it is a moral enlargement on which the truly renovated Christian hath set his affections and his hopes. They are the glories of perfect virtue after which he aspires. It is the fulness of the image and character of the Godhead that forms the triumph and the rejoicing of the blest in eternity. It is an emancipation from the present carnality, and the present corruptness, and the weight of present low and earthly affections—into love and light and liberty, while they gaze directly on the excellence of God, and reflect that excellence back again from their own character—This is the true heaven which they have in prospect, and for which they have already set themselves out in busy preparation—a preparation therefore of holiness, the only preparation that can fit them for joining in the services or the joys of the upper sanctuary, the only one that can make them meet for the inheritance of the saints.

But meanwhile they have somewhat more than a future hope —they have a present help; and it is worthy of remark that they are not delivered from their infirmities, they are only helped against them. The burden of them, it would appear, is not lifted off; but strength is afforded that they may be able to bear it. The pressure still exists; but there is an adequate power of resistance given, by which it is effectually withstood. Nevertheless it is a pressure, a felt and grievous pressure, under which they groan—even as a strong man might do under a burden, though able with much pain and fatigue to carry it. It is just so with the Christian. He is still weary and heavy laden; and in this respect he differs from a saint in heaven. But his sins, which so weary and so overload him, are not cherished by him as his enjoyments—they are hated and denied and striven against, as his deadly enemies; and in this respect he differs from an unrenovated man upon earth. His state in fact is a state of composition. His life is a life of conflict. There is a war in his soul. The vile body aspires to the mastery by its instigations. The mind seeks to retain the ascendant over it; and God's Spirit is sent to help it in its purposes. There will be repose at length, but not here. The battle will not be terminated on this side of death. But reinforcements of strength will be daily sent to keep up the combat—by sustaining that one party, which, but for them, would have surrendered. So that though the soul is not defeated, it is kept in the busy turmoil of a sore warfare; it is often cast down though not destroyed.

'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' We are convinced that many feel a general undirected desire to be right —a kind of vague though vivid earnestness—an indefinite longing after God and goodness—a sort of looking towards Zion and preference for heavenly things—who at the same time are unable to rest upon aught that is specific or satisfying. They have the sense of not being as they should be—an indistinct yet strong impression of helplessness—the assurance, though not a very specific or luminous one, that there is a way of passing into a state of rest and a state of enlargement, could they only but find it out and practically enter upon it—There is such an obscure, yet upon the whole urgent and habitual tendency incidental to men at the outset of their religious course, and even abiding with them, as it did with Paul and his disciples in our text, for a long time after they had entered upon it. They know not perfectly or precisely what is the matter with them, or what that is which is correctly suited to the disease or the deficiency under which they labour. They would fain give vent to all this feeling of want and of necessity in prayer; but, hazy and unsettled as their spiritual conceptions are, they know not what to pray for as they ought. We think that there must be some present whose inward experience responds to the sketch that we now set before you—whose hearts are filled with desirousness, but who, incapable of shaping the expression of it into any distinct or definite prayers, send forth instead the sighs and the aspirations which bespeak little more than a soul in earnest. Amid all these struggles, then, between the fervent sincerity of the feelings on the one hand, and the cloudiness of apprehension and intellect on the other, it is somewhat satisfactory to perceive, that even the apostle and his converts, after they had received the fruits of the Spirit, had experience of the very same thing—that before their eye too there passed such floating uncertainties of yet distant and unrealized attainment as they could not embody—that, under the pressure of yet unsatisfied desire and a still remaining ignorance of what they would be at, they heaved ejaculations rather than prayers; and that because they knew not what to pray for as they ought.

'But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

It is still more satisfactory to be told, as we are in this clause, that, in those general and vague but withal very intense and earnest aspirations of soul which we have now adverted to, there is not only a resemblance to the habit of Paul himself and of those disciples who had the first-fruits of the Spirit, but that it is the Spirit itself who dictates and inspires them. When the Spirit maketh intercession for us it is not by any direct supplication from Himself to God the Father in behalf of any one individual; but it is by pouring upon that individual the Spirit of grace and supplication. The man whom He prays for is in fact the organ of His prayer. The prayer passes, as it were, from the Spirit through him who is the object of it. Those groanings of the Spirit of God which cannot be uttered are those unutterable desires wherewith the heart of a seeker after Zion is charged; and which, in defect of language, perhaps even in defect of very clear and definite conceptions, can only find vent in the ardent but unspeakable breathings of one who feels his need and longs to be relieved from it—who hath a strong and general appetency after righteousness, and yet can only sigh it forth in ejaculations of intense earnestness. Now these are here called the groanings of the Spirit of God, but it is in fact He who hath awakened them in the spirit of man. When He intercedes for a believer, the believer's own heart is the channel through which the intercession finds its way to the throne of grace. It is not that there is any want either of light or of utterance about Him; but He doeth His work gradually upon us, and often infuses a desirousness into our hearts before He reveals the truth with distinctness unto our understandings. He walketh by progressive footsteps in accomplishing the creation of a new moral world, even as He did when employed in the creation of our present system of materialism. He then moved upon the face of the waters before He said, Let there be light—and there was light. The dark and muddy element was first put into agitation, and the very turbulence into which it was thrown may have only thickened at the first that very chaos out of which it was emerging; and so it often is with him who is born of the Spirit when the Spirit begins to move upon his soul. There is labour without light. There is a strong and general excitement without a clear guidance, either where you are to turn, or on what visible path you are to enter—there is a busy fermentation of shadowy and floating desires and indistinct feelings, whether of a present misery or a future and somehow attainable enlargement: and these all come forth in the very indications of our text—proceeding originally from God's Spirit, but passing through the intermedium of man's; and, while struggling there with the darkness and obstinate carnality of nature, giving rise to a vigour and a vehemence of emotion that discharges itself in sighs but not in articulations. If any here experience such a condition, or make any approximations toward it, let him not despair—for it may be the Spirit that is at work with him; and he may now be labouring in the agonies of his new birth, in the distress of his coming regeneration.

That among the first-fruits of the Spirit there should be the prayers of deep and desirous earnestness, is in perfect harmony with the order of the administration of grace. It gives important insight into the methods of the divine economy in this world when we observe that the promises of God are meant not to suspend but to stimulate our prayers. And accordingly, after that

He has declared He will give the clean heart and the right spirit, He saith, Yet for all these things must I be inquired after. Before, in fact, He poureth those influences upon the soul by which it becometh rich in all spiritual accomplishments, He poureth upon it a sense of its own barrenness and a correspondent longing after the right feelings and fertilities of a new creature ; and so, anterior to all other supplies from the sanctuary that is above, did He pour on the house of David of the Spirit of grace and supplication. One of His promises is to turn the soul into a well-watered garden ; yet, ere this be realized, there must be a felt thirst on the part of the soul ; a hungering and thirsting after righteousness before that it is filled ; an appetite that craves to be satisfied ere the satisfying food is administered—a seeking that precedes the finding : And so from the descriptions of prophecy it would appear, that when the desert is made to flourish, it is by the pouring forth of water upon thirsty ground—upon ground not merely destitute, but that feels itself to be so, and desires to be relieved. Let us cease to wonder, then, that prayer should appear among the foremost indications of the Spirit of God being at work with us ; or that it takes the precedency of other blessings ; or that it has happened so frequently in the Church, that a season of supplication went before the season either of a gracious deliverance or of a gracious revival ; or that with individuals also, as well as with communities, ere you can point to any one of them as rejoicing in the hope or as fruitful in all the righteousness of the gospel, you find him earnest in supplication ; and perhaps too a supplication that is not spoken, that does not find articulation for its effluxes from the heart, that does not even proceed on any very clear or distinct conception of what the want is or what are the supplies which are expressly suited thereunto ; but that in the language of my text, ascends in general and undirected fervency from the soul, 'with groanings which cannot be uttered.'

And neither are we to wonder that, though this be indeed the Spirit's doing, there is nevertheless a mixture of darkness and distress in the whole operation. There is perfect light and liberty with Him. But when He comes into contact, and especially at the first, with a soul before dead in trespasses and sins—when He has to operate on that mass of carnality, where He finds nought but one inert and sluggish mass of resistance—when, instead of doing the work separately and by Himself, He does it through the opaque medium of a corrupt human soul—

we should not marvel though the prayers that even He hath originated be tinged with the obscurity of that dull and distorted medium through which they have to pass. We know that to the sun in the firmament we should ascribe not merely the splendour of the risen day, but even the faintest streaks and glimmerings of incipient twilight; and that without him all would be thick and impenetrable darkness. It is because of the gross and intervening earth, that, though something be seen at the earliest dawn of morn, it is yet seen so dimly, and the eye is still bewildered among visionary and unsettled forms, while it wanders over the landscape. And, in like manner, it is the Spirit to whom we shall owe at last the effulgence of a complete manifestation; and to whom also we owe at present even the misty and troubled light that hath excited us to seek, but is scarcely able to guide us in our inquiries. And this imperfection is not because of Himself, in whom there is perfect and unclouded splendour. It is only because of the gross and terrestrial mind upon which He operates. There is the conflict of two ingredients, even the light that is in Him and the darkness that is in us; and the result of the conflict is prayer, but prayer mixed with much remaining ignorance. It is the mixture of His intercession with our unutterable groanings—an obscure day that precedes the daylight of the soul—a lustre that cometh from Him, but tarnished with the soil and broken with the turbulence of our own accursed nature. And let us not think it strange therefore, that, as the compound effect of God's Spirit working with our spirit, and not overbearing our infirmities but only helping them—let us cease to think it strange, if the effect should only be a certain vehemence or urgency of desire, but still in some measure vague or undirected, because of a still abiding darkness in the soul. And again, therefore, to comfort all who are labouring among the disquietudes of such a condition, we repeat, that even amid the mazes and uncertainties in which they toil and have as yet had little satisfaction, the Spirit for aught we know may even now be at work with them. The heavenly visitant may have made His entrance, and have begun the process of a glorious transformation on the materials of their inward chaos. The spiritual twilight may now be breaking out as the harbinger of a coming glory, as the dim flickerings of that light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

There is an example remarkably analogous to this in the old prophets. They spake only as they were moved by the Holy

Ghost. They poured forth their predictions only as the Spirit gave them utterance; and though He of course knew the meaning of all that He had inspired, yet they themselves, though the organs for the conveyance of His intimations to the world, knew but little or nothing of the sense that lay under them. And accordingly we are informed by the apostle Peter of the very singular attitude in which they stood—as prying into the sense of their own prophecies—as searching and inquiring diligently into the nature of that coming grace, whereof the Holy Ghost had given them certain warnings, which to themselves were unintelligible—as speculating what thing it could be, and what manner of time it was which the Spirit of Christ in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. It was not in fact unto themselves but unto us that they did minister; and though the resemblance does not hold throughout, yet we may gather from the case that we are now quoting, how in like manner as holy men of old knew not the meaning of those predictions wherewith themselves were inspired—so holy men of the present day, and more especially at the outset of their holiness, may feel the inspiration of a strong desirousness from above, and yet be ignorant of the whole force and meaning of their own prayers. There may be a decided fervour of prayerfulness—an aspiring tendency after better things—yet a most indistinct apprehension of what the things really are of which they most stand in need, and that are most suited to them. And so at the very time that the Spirit helpeth their infirmities, they know not what to pray for as they ought; and at the very time when the Spirit itself maketh intercession for them, do they send forth from the recesses of their now touched and awakened souls, groanings which cannot be uttered.

But in conclusion, it ought to be remarked that this state of darkness is not a desirable one to be persisted in. One would not choose to live always in twilight; but rather does he press onward, in wish and in expectation, to the coming day. Labour, then, after distinct and satisfying apprehensions of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Seek to know your disease; and seek to know the powers and the properties of that medicine which is set forth in the gospel. Study and search with diligence, and by a careful perusal of Holy Writ, into the economy of man's restoration—the blood which atones—the righteousness which justifies—the sanctifying power that maketh holy—the law that before your reconciliation condemns you, and that after your reconciliation becomes the rule by which you are to walk, the compass by which you are to guide your movements towards heaven. Even in this work too you must have the Spirit to help your infirmities. For He is the Spirit of wisdom as well as of prayer, and gives you revelation in the knowledge of Christ. You increase by Him in acquaintance with God; and though at the beginning of His work, and perhaps for some time afterwards, there may be a sore conflict of doubts and desires and difficulties, yet such is the process of this work, that you will at length come to experience that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is light—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

But still it ought ever to be kept in mind, that while we are in this tabernacle there will to the latest hour of our abode be a remainder of darkness. There may be a brightening manifestation of divine things as we proceed onwards. But our outlook towards them will be through the loopholes of a bedimmed and tainted materialism. Still we shall see through a glass darkly. It is in fact with the light of the gospel as it is with its love, and its peace, and its holiness. It will be compounded with the grossness of an earthly nature. It will be shaded with an incumbent carnality. The realities of faith will be seen, not through a purely ethereal medium, but through a curtain as it were—the transparency whereof shall have much of the soil and the tarnish of nature pervading it. And this transparency, though clarified as we advance, will never be perfect on this side of death; insomuch that the complaint of our text will be found to suit the Christians of all degrees, the disciples of all stages. Still we shall not know all the things which we should pray for as we ought. Still will the Spirit be needed to help this infirmity. Still will His illumination have to meet and to struggle with the impediments of a vile body; and the desirousness after more light—still outstripping the actual attainment—will vent itself forth in some degree as at the first, in aspirations that are yet indefinite, in groanings that are yet unutterable. Let this teach us, in all our meditation and study upon things that are sacred, still to proceed on the incapacity of Nature for the right apprehension of them — still to recognise the Holy Ghost in His office as a revealer — still, in our perusals of the word, to court the guidance of that Spirit through whom it is alone that the word shines with clear and convincing lustre upon the soul—still to meet the promise of help to the infirmity of our understanding with a prayer for that help: and thus shall we be enabled more and more to order our speech and our argument aright before God — to pray intelligently as well as affectionately—and to body forth in words that may be audibly uttered, in conceptions that may be distinctly seized upon, those desires which now actuate us in a way so vague and undefinable.

Ver. 27.—'And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.'

You may not perhaps have reflected much on the office of the Spirit as an intercessor — viewing this as more properly the office of the now exalted Saviour. The Saviour intercedes for us in heaven. The Spirit intercedes for us in our own breast. The one intercession is pure and altogether unmixed with the dross of earthliness. The other passes through a corrupt medium, and finds its way among the adverse impediments of an earthly nature; and by the time that it cometh forth in expression, has had to encounter the elements of darkness and of carnality that are within us. And, not from any defect in the power which originates our prayers, but from a defect in the organ by which they are conveyed, do they arise as so many broken and indistinct aspirations to Him who sitteth on the throne. The man from whom they ascend is perhaps conscious of nothing but a deep and determined earnestness—thoroughly intent on being right, yet clouded and confused it may be in his apprehensions as to the way of becoming so—not knowing therefore what he should pray for, yet in virtue of the Spirit's operation pouring out the ejaculations of utmost feeling and utmost fervency. Now, in like manner as the holy men of old when moved by the Holy Ghost did not understand the predictions that were put into their mouths, so might holy men now, though similarly moved, not understand their own prayers. All that they are sensible of may be a spirit of prayerfulness venting itself in the breathings that are not articulated, in the groans that cannot be uttered. But though they have no such insight into the workings and expressions of their own heart, God who searcheth the heart discerns them thoroughly. He knows from what quarter they come—whether from His own pure Spirit, or from that corrupt origin whence there issueth nought but that which is abomination in His sight. He can distinguish between the genuine and the counterfeit; and more especially is He acquainted with the mind of His own Spirit—even as man is acquainted with his own thoughts. If from the former, the prayer that has been suggested—even though it announce nothing to the man himself but the intense desirousness whereby he feels that he is actuated—announces most clearly to God all the characters of truth and rightness and conformity with the whole views and spirit of His government which can recommend it to his acceptance. He will meet with graciousness the supplication that Himself hath awakened. He hath said in another place that if any man ask that which is agreeable to the will of God, He will give it to him. Now what the Spirit suggests—though darkly to the man himself, yet clearly to Him who searcheth man's heart and can ascertain the character of every movement that is experienced there—whatever is thus suggested must be agreeable to the will of God, and have the very recommendation upon which God hath pledged Himself to entertain and to answer it.

LECTURE LIX.

ROMANS VIII. 28.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

He recurs again in this verse to the topic that he introduced in the eighteenth verse, even to the sufferings of the present time; and after having contrasted them with the glory and the enlargement of their future prospects, and having adverted not merely to the hope that will be realized then, but also to the help that is administered now, he, as a last argument for reconciling his disciples to all the adversities of their earthly condition, affirms that they all work together for their good; that even the crosses and disasters of life are so many blessings in disguise; and that the whole machinery of Providence, in fact, is at work for the accomplishment of a great and beneficent purpose towards them. It in the first place is abundantly obvious of many a single adversity, that a great and permanent good may come out of it. This is often verified on the ground even of everyday experience—when the disease brought on by intemperance hath been known to germinate a course of determined sobriety; and the loss by a daring speculation hath checked the adventurer on his hazardous path, and turned him into the walk of safe though moderate prosperity; and the felt discomfort of a quarrel hath made him a far more patient and pacific member of society than he else would have been; and many other visitations, unpalatable on the instant, but profitable afterwards, have each turned out to have in it the wholesomeness of a medical draught as well as its bitterness. Apart from Christianity, or from the bearings which our history on earth has on our preparation for heaven,—man has often found that it was good for him to have been afflicted; that under the severe but salutary discipline wisdom has been increased, and character has been strengthened, and the rough independence of human wilfulness has been tamed, and many asperities of temper have been worn away; and he who before was the boisterous and implacable and unsafe member of society, has been chastened down into all the arts and delicacies of pleasing companionship. And so of many a single infliction on the man who is viewed, not as a citizen of the world that is below, but as a candidate for the world that is above. The overthrow of his fortune has given him a strong practical set for eternity. The death of his child has weaned him from all the idolatries of a scene—whereof the family, the home, the peace and shelter of the domestic roof, formed the most powerful enchantments. Even the dreariness of remorse hath given a new energy to his spiritual frame, and made him both a more skilful and a more vigilant warrior on the field of contest than before. The tempests of life, if so withstood that they have not overthrown him, will have fastened him more steadfastly to the hold of religious principle. It is thus that the traveller through life is nurtured for the immortality beyond it. He is made perfect by sufferings. He sits more loose to the world in proportion as he finds less in it to fascinate and detain him. Its very disappointments have the effect of throwing him upon other resources; and, casting away the desires and the delusions of the hope that perisheth, he clings, as to the alone anchor of his soul, by the hope that abideth for ever. On the scale of infinite duration, a present evil becomes a future and everlasting benefit; and we are at no loss to perceive how even a calamity, that to the eye looks most tremendous and would overwhelm one of the children of this world in despair, may work for the good of one of the children of light, by working out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But these adverse visitations do not always come singly. The apostle supposes otherwise, as may be gathered from the phrase of "all things working together." He supposes in the text, not one single influence from one event alone; but he supposes the mutual or the concurrent influence of two or more events, all verging however towards the one result of good for him to whom they have befallen. It has often been said that misfortunes seldom come by themselves; and there is no doubt that it often occurs, when one passage of our history is signalized by an accumulation of ills—when, instead of being called upon to measure our strength with one calamity, our attention is shared and distracted among several—when the boding dread of disaster and distress lowers upon us from more than one quarter of that visible sphere by which we are surrounded—and when we are made the subjects, not of one, but of manifold tribulations,—it has often been alleged that the pressure of each distinct calamity is lightened when the anxiety is thus dispersed and divided among several. I do not think so. I hold it easier to meet with the summoned intrepidity of the bosom one great and nearly overwhelming misfortune, than it is to have a constant tumult kept up in the spirits by the ceaseless play of so many petty yet interminable harassments. I hold it a less ineligible condition to have all the energies of the soul collected and prepared for a mighty shock of adversity, than to have them wasted in the skirmishes of a lighter yet more complicated warfare. I hold it not only an occasion of greater glory, but positively an occasion of greater ease, when one tremendous combatant approaches on whom there hang the fearful issues of life, or of that which than life is dearer—than when doomed by the stings of an insect tribe to die by inches, or to spend in perpetual annoyance the remainder of your days. And therefore it is well that, for the comfort of exercised humanity, deliverance is promised out of six and of seven troubles; and when we are told that the afflictions of the just are many, but that God will extricate out of them all; and when we are bidden to count it all joy though we should fall not into one but into manifold temptations; and lastly, when we are assured by the apostle that not merely one but that all things work together for good unto them who love God. For it is the compounding of one evil thing with another that aggravates so much the distress of each of them; and the sensation of plague or of perplexity increases in a much more rapid proportion than their number; and like the problem of the three bodies, one additional element of distress might make the line of prudence far more difficult, and every plan and every prospect far more inscrutable than before: And thus though each of our cares might be easily provided for could we meet each with undivided strength and bend upon it the whole force of our anxiety—yet, from the very multitude of them, might there ensue a general helplessness, that needs to have the precise consolation which is now before us. The mechanism of Providence is made up of so many parts as often to baffle the comprehension of man—yet all is clear to the eye and under the sovereign hand of Him who works it; and when we are lost in the bewilderments of a history that we cannot scan, when we are entangled among the mazes of a labyrinth that we cannot unravel, it is well to be told that all is ordered, and that all worketh for good.

I should imagine that I now speak to the experience of those who, manifold in the adventures of business, have a very extended circumference around them, from every quarter of which fears and mischances and the arrivals of disastrous intelligence might bring fresh and frequent disquietudes into the soul; and who therefore may have felt what it was to be visited with one plague after another—perhaps agonized in all the moral sensibilities of their nature by some aggravated wrong of injustice, and ere they have recovered from this shock, told of some menacing fluctuation in that market where the main bulk of their interest lies; and furthermore waiting on the rack of anxiety for the appearance of that richly-laden vessel, which some recent storm must have put in jeopardy, and that with the eye of midnight fancy they conceive to be fearfully rocking amid the surges of an angry ocean: And all this mixed up with the rumoured bankruptcy of customers and correspondents, with bills unanswered, and the swift approaches of that time when payments that far exceed their present strength shall be imperiously required: These are the foreign invaders of their peace, and should they meet unhappily with the broils and the miseries of a distempered home—should these days of vexation be followed up by evenings of discontent and discordancy; or, what is also grievous, should there be peace and love in the dwelling, but its dearest inmate be laid on the couch of irrecoverable sickness—should one child of the family be dying, or another by his vice and his wilfulness minister a grief as heavy to the heart of his parent—should the burden upon his spirit, which this sorely agitated man brings with him daily from abroad, have nought to alleviate its pressure within the door of his own habitation—what a noble faith it would require to bear him up under the weight and accumulation of all these evils; and is there aught within the compass of nature so suited to his weary and heavy-laden spirit, as the assurance of my text, that all of them shall work, and work together for his good?

You must often have been sensible, in the course of your own history, how big and how important the consequences were that emanated from one event, which in itself was insignificant—how on the slightest accidents the greatest interests were suspended—how, moving apparently at random, you met with people or with occasions that gave rise perhaps to far the most memorable passages in your life—how the very street on which you chanced to move brought you into contact with invitations or appointments or proposals of some sort, which brought results of magnitude along with them—insomuch that the colour and direction of your whole futurity have turned on what, apart from this mighty bearing, would have been the veriest trifle in the world. It is thus that the great drama of a nation's politics may hinge on the veriest bagatelle that could modify or suggest some process of thought in the heart of a single individual. The most remarkable instance of this which I at present recollect is, that the pursuers of Mahomet, who followed hard upon him with a view to take his life, were turned away from the mouth of the cave in which he had the moment before taken shelter by the flight of a bird from one of the shrubs that grew at its entry—inferring that, had he recently passed that way, the bird must have been previously disturbed and would not now have made its appearance. It is a striking remark of the historian, that this bird, by its flight upon this occasion, changed the destiny of the world—instrumental as it was in perpetuating the life of the false prophet, and along with him the reign of that superstition which to this day hath a wider ascendency over our species than Christianity itself. And such indeed are the links and concatenations of all history. A word, a thought, an unforeseen emotion, an event of paltriest dimensions in itself, may be the germ of an influence wide as a continent and lasting as a thousand years; and thus it is that the politics of man are baffled in the mystery of that higher politics, by which the government of the Supreme is conducted, and whereby the minutest accidents and the mightiest results interchange and have equal efficacy the one upon the other. It is well that God has the management; and that what to man is a chaos, is in the hands of God a sure and unerring mechanism. Man is lost and wilders in the multiplicity of things and their diverse operations; and he staggers and is at his wit's end; and therefore it is well that all things are under the control of that great and presiding intelligence which is above, and that God maketh all things work together for good unto those who love Him.

To conclude then for the present. Do you not perceive that at this rate God would be divested of His sovereignty, if His superintendence were not universal? Is not the historical fact, that what is most minute often gives rise to what is most momentous, an argument for the theological doctrine of a providence that reaches even to the slightest and most unnoticeable varieties? If God did not number all the hairs of our head—if His appointments did not include the fall of every sparrow to the ground—then, from the observed relation of events to each other, empires might have fallen, and the faith of whole nations been subverted, and the greatest evolutions been made in the progress of human affairs, all the time that the will of God and the authority of God were elements of utter insignificance. Should He let go as it were one small ligament in the vast and complicated machinery of the world, it might all run, so to speak, into utter divergency from the purposes of the mind that formed it. As things are constituted, the influence of littles carries along with it an experimental demonstration that the power and direction of the Godhead extend even unto littles. From it we argue that there is no alternative between a providence so particular as to embrace all, and an atheism so universal as to exclude all from the guidance and the guardianship of a Divinity. In such a world, where all are so bound together in the way of influence or unvarying succession, there is need of such a providence. And even from this contemplation may be gotten something that should reconcile us to the idea of a predestinating God. In the following verses the apostle passes onwards to this conception; and we shall be more prepared to go along with him, when we only think, that by shutting out the ordination of God from any event in nature or in history, we in fact shut Him out from that lengthened train of events whereof it only formed one of the stepping-stones; that by breaking one link, however small, we in fact wrest the chain out of that hand from which it was suspended; that by refusing Him the supreme and directing agency over the least incidents, we in fact depose Him from all government of men or of things, even in the greatest passages of their story; in a word, that we cannot disjoin God from one particle of the universe, without desolating the universe of its God.

'To them that love God.' We have already spoken of His providence, and of the sureness wherewith He works out His own purposes by a mechanism far too complex for our apprehension; and of the way in which He intermingles the little with the great in the history of human affairs; and of the need that there is for a constant superintendence by Him—seeing that on the minutest incidents of life its mightiest and most abiding interests are often made to turn; and of the support which a sound experience renders to a most important doctrine of sound theology—even that God, instead of sitting in remote and lofty unconcern as to our world—save in the noblest and grandest passages of its history, busies Himself in fact with the operations of every atom, and bears a microscopic regard to the most trivial of events and of things—even while He sits in heaven's high throne, and casts a directing eye over space and its immeasurable regions. This we have already attempted to make as palpable to your discernment as we could; and we are now led by the clause that is before us, to bethink ourselves of the character of those to whom it is that God maketh all things work together for their good—even them that love Him.

We seldom meet with so much of earnestness among those who are intent on their preparation for heaven, as that which is excited by the question, whether or not they really do love God? It is indeed a trying question, on which few adventure themselves, and on which most of those who do have to record that marvellously little satisfaction is to be found. It forms one of the most anxious topics of self-examination; and the thing which the inquirer is in search after, even the affection for the Godhead that exists in his own bosom, may be either so dull and undiscernible of itself, or lie so buried in the multitude of other things that crowd and confuse the receptacles of the inner man, as to elude the investigation altogether. And then the question comes, How am I to be assured of my interest in the declaration that all things shall work together for my good? The promise here is not unto all in the general, but to those who harbour within them a certain feeling, and are stamped, upon their moral or spiritual nature, with a certain character. It is unto those who love God. Now I may not be sure that I love Him. I may desire to love Him; but to desire is one thing, and to do is another. I may have a wish for the affection—of this I should suppose that many of you are conscious; but to have a wish for the affection is not to have the affection itself, and the question recurs, What title have I to appropriate the comforts of this passage, or to presume on the strength of an affirmation that is evidently restricted to the possessors of a certain grace, even of love to God — what title have I to imagine that the power and the providence of heaven are wholly upon my side?

Now it does not follow that you are altogether destitute of love to God because it stirs so languidly within you that you are not able very distinctly or decidedly to recognise it. Your very desire to love Him is a good symptom—your very grief that you love Him not bodes favourably for you. The complaint that you utter of a heart hard and ungrateful, and that hath been very much unmoved by the claims which God hath to all the affections of it, is one which has been re-echoed by the disciples and the saints of all ages; and which, if you feel as you ought, will to the end of life be the subject of your humiliation and your prayers. Love to God is a heavenly aspiration that is ever kept in check by the drag and the restraint of an earthly nature; and from which you shall not be unbound till the soul by death has made its escape from the vile body, and cleared its unfettered way to the realms of light and life and liberty. In very proportion to the desirousness wherewith you now soar aloft, will you be galled by the tenicle that holds you; and feeling with the Psalmist of old how your soul cleaves unto the dust, will you pray that God might quicken you. Where there is a complaint of hardness, there is in fact a beginning of tenderness. Where there is an honest wish for affection, there is in fact the embryo affection itself, struggling for a growth and an establishment in the aspiring bosom. Where there is a feeling of sad insensibility, the sensibility hath begun; and that good seed, which one can with difficulty see among the still vigorous and unbroken elements of carnality, is already deposited, and will rise into a tree that may overspread with its droppings the whole mass of our then regenerated nature. Meanwhile it is most desirable that the germ should expand; that the precious element should be fostered into a more visible magnitude; that the affection, of which you are now so fruitlessly in quest, should so grow as to announce itself; that the flame should brighten and break forth out of its present dull and lambent obscurity: And the question is, how shall this be brought about? Never, we affirm, by the exercise of self-inspection alone — never in the mere employment of inwardly brooding on the characters that are already graven upon the tablet of the heart—never by looking to yourself as the subject, at the time when you are called to look unto the Saviour as the object. The eye is not a luminary; it sheds no light on the field of its contemplation; it diffuses no heat over it;—it only witnesses the splendour, but can in no way create it. It may discover that which is visible, but it does not make it visible; and, therefore, if you complain that you cannot see the love of God within you, it is not by poring and penetrating among the arcana of your moral constitution that this love is to be inspired.

'To those who are the called.' This new clause may be turned to some practical account in the resolving of the difficulty. They who love God are described by another and a distinct characteristic. They are the called, by which we understand not those who have merely had the call or invitation of the gospel sounded in their ears; but those who have felt the power of the call upon their hearts, and have complied with it accordingly. In the well-weighed language of our Shorter Catechism, it signifies those who are effectually called. There has not merely been a call on the part of the gospel, but there has been a compliance with it on the part of their souls—and that just because the gospel hath come to them, not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance. Their eyes have been opened to behold the reality of the gospel overtures. They recognise the death of Christ as an effective propitiation for sin. They perceive that the benefit of this propitiation is held out in offer to them individually. They hear the beseeching voice of God accompanied with terms such as *any* and *all* and *whosoever;* and they understand this to be as good as a voice addressed specifically to each of themselves; and they regard a message so couched and so worded to be a message from Heaven to their own doors; and as the message is neither more nor less than an entreaty on the part of God that they will be reconciled to Him, they respond to it with the full consent and confidence of their hearts; and by so doing they in fact enter upon reconciliation. Their faith in the offer constitutes their acceptance of it. By meeting God's assurance with their trust, they will find that, according to this trust, so shall it be done unto them. By simply regarding the transaction of the sacrifice for sin as a real and honest transaction, they shall have a full share in it, and be absolved from their sin. Many are outwardly called; but, turning a deaf and listless ear thereunto, they come not under the designation of my text. They are not the called—a designation reserved for those who have not only heard the call, but who have perceived its honesty and worth, and have proceeded upon it.

You see then the connexion that there is between the two characteristics of those for whose good God maketh all things to work together. The two characteristics are that they love God, and that they are the called. The second of these in the order of enumeration is the first in the order of succession. It is only upon our entertaining the call of the gospel and consenting thereunto—it is only upon this transition taking place in our minds—that there ensues a transition of the heart to the love of God from that indifference or even hatred which we formerly bore unto Him. Anterior to this, the thought of God stood associated with feelings of jealousy and insecurity and alarm. The conscience, if at all faithful, could not fail to reproach us for our delinquencies. The law of God, and more especially if regarded in its pure and lofty and uncompromising character, could not but suggest the disturbing imagination of many accounts that were unsettled, and many violations for which no recompence to its outraged dignity had been made. The character of God, as being that of august and unapproachable sacredness, offered no asylum from the disquietudes that haunted us; nor could we ever, with our eyes open to the incommutable attributes of His holiness and His justice and His truth—could we ever find any solid repose in that fancied indulgence of His nature, which forms at once the refuge and the delusion of a meagre and sentimental piety. Those imaginations of the Godhead which make up a religion of poetry are not enough for a religion of peace; and, in these circumstances, He, to all practical accounts, is regarded by the eye of nature with that dread and that disquietude which are inspired by the sight of an enemy. It is a sense of guilt that has so alienated us from God; and it is under the latent yet powerful conviction of His displeasure that we stand before Him with our hearts in chill and torpid apathy, and our countenances fallen. It is this which stands as a wall of iron between heaven and earth, and wholly debars the intimacies either of confidence or of regard with Him who dwelleth in the high and the awful sanctuary. And the only way, we repeat it, by which this else impregnable barrier can be scaled, and we can draw nigh in kind affection to the Father who made us, is by accepting the only authentic offer that He ever held out to us of reconciliation. It is by beholding Him in the face of Christ. It is by rejoicing in that mercy which flows so copiously on all who will, through the channel of His consecrated priesthood—and that not at the expense of His other attributes, but with their fullest and noblest vindication. It is this alone which by quelling the suspicions and the fears of guilty nature, at the very time that it presents the attractive exhibition of a God whose graciousness hath not impaired but illustrated His glory—it is this alone that can achieve the great moral revolution in the character of man; and by rending the enmity of nature, can soften the before sullen and intractable heart of man, for the impression of that new character in virtue of which he now loves God.

Now it is by the recurrence of the mind to that truth which first conveyed to it the love of God, that this affection is upholden—just as to rekindle your admiration of a beautiful scene or picture, you would return again to gaze upon it. It is on this principle that so much stress is laid on keeping in memory the truths which we believe—insomuch that if not so recalled and dwelt upon, we are said to have believed them in vain. The doctrines of the gospel are intended for a further purpose than that of merely making up a creed. One main design of them is to move the affections; and more especially to re-awaken that affection to which nature, when oppressed with fears or weighed down with the lethargies of sense, is wholly incompetent—even the love of God. And that this love be perennial in our hearts, there must be a constant reference to the truth which first inspired it. The way to keep our hearts in the love of God is to build ourselves up on our most holy faith. To recall the emotion when it hath vanished from our heart, we must recall the truth which hath vanished from our remembrance. The way to aliment and perpetuate the one is to detain the other, and let it be the habitual topic of our fondest contemplation. You complain of your love to God being so exceedingly dim as to be beyond the reach of your discernment. I know of no other way to brighten it, than simply to think of Him as He is, and more especially as He stands forth to the believer's eye in the glass of His own revelation—as abundant in mercy, but mercy shrined as it were in the immutabilities of truth and holiness—as longing for the approaches even of the guiltiest of His children, but laying His firm and authoritative interdict on that approach in any other way than by the appointed mediatorship—as turning His throne into a throne of grace, but without undermining the eternal props of judgment and of righteousness by which it is upholden—as mingling in His own character the tenderness of a friend with the venerable dignity of a Sovereign—as blending at once in that economy which He hath set up over His erring creatures, the meekness of a paternal government with the majesty of its power. The man who is groping for the discovery of an affection towards God among the secrecies of his own inscrutable bosom, I would bid cast an upward eye to the revealed countenance of the Godhead; and this will do something more than discover the affection—it will create it. Ere it can be made manifest, it must be made to exist; and, most assuredly, it is not by downwardly probing and penetrating among the mysteries of your own moral constitution that you will summon it into being. Ere you can love God, you must see Him to be lovely; and this is a vision which the terrors of unexpiated guilt, and the sense of a controversy with God that has not yet been satisfactorily or intelligibly made up, are sure to scare away. It is the gospel, and it alone, that resolves this obstruction—nor am I aware of any expedient by which the first and the greatest law can again be established within us, than by accepting the call of that gospel wherein He is propounded as a just God and a Saviour.

'According to His purpose'—or according to His previous design. We now tread on the borders of what is deemed by many to be a great mystery; and though we have no great respect for that theology which loves to grapple with the incomprehensibles of lofty speculation, yet we must not shrink from aught that Scripture lays across our path. There is an ambition on the part of some to be wise above that which is written; but that is no reason why, in avoiding this, we should not attempt at least to be wise up to that which is written. You may remember that, a few chapters ago—which, from the exceeding tardiness of our progress, makes it nearly as many years ago—we came to an encounter with the very formidable doctrine of original sin, and found the task so ponderous that it took several successive Sabbaths ere we did acquit ourselves thereof. The few succeeding verses present us with a similar exercise on the doctrine of predestination; and we most assuredly would not embark on so arduous an undertaking, did we not hold it right to follow fearlessly wherever the light of revelation may carry us; and did we not further believe, that, like all other Scripture, this too is profitable, and in most entire harmony with the interests of truth and virtue in our world.

The purpose, then, signifies a previous design; and this in so far previous as to be even anterior to the existence of those who are the objects of it. In the Second Epistle to Timothy there is an allusion to this very purpose of our text, and where it stands associated too with the very call that is now under consideration. "God hath saved us," says the apostle, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The purpose, then, is the prior determination in the mind of the Divinity that such a one should be converted from the error of his ways—should be called from darkness unto light—should make that transition by which he passes from a state of condemnation to a state of acceptance; and the call, which we have already supposed to be an effectual one, is just as distinguishable from this previous determination, as the execution of a purpose is from the purpose itself—or as a design entertained and resolved upon long ago is from its fulfilment, that may only take place this very day, or at some distant and indefinite futurity before us. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." By the one He makes the decree—by the other He carries it into effect. And we again repeat, that it is not in the daring spirit of an adventurer we would have you to enter this field, or as on a game of strength or of skill with the difficulties of human argument; but in the simple and lowly spirit of genuine disciples would we have you to submit yourselves to the Divine testimony.

It is quite obvious that the being *called* here means something totally different from what it does in the verse where it is said that many are called but few are chosen. In that verse the call of the gospel is supposed to be heard by many, but complied with by few. But in the verse before us, they who are the called have not only heard the call, but they have responded to it. In the one sense all who are here present may be made to pass among the called simply by sounding forth among you the offers and the invitations of grace—simply by bidding, as we are fully warranted to do, each and all to put his confidence in the blood of Christ, and so have his sins washed away—simply by coming forth with the assurance, which we cast fearlessly abroad in the hearing of the people, that there is no man, be his guilt what it may, whom God will not welcome into peace with Him, would he only draw nigh in the name of that great propitiation which has been rendered for the sins of the world. In this sense every one of you is called. But it must be clear to your own experience, that there is the widest possible difference between one class and another as to their reception of this call—that on some it falls in downright bluntness, and moves them not out of the deep unconcern and lethargy of nature—whilst others recognise it as a voice from heaven, and are awakened thereby to a sense of reconciliation, and feel a charm and a preciousness in the doctrine of that Cross, whereon the enmity between God and a sinful world was done away; and through the faith which they are enabled to put in the word of this testimony, are translated into a felt peace and friendship with that God who turns away His displeasure from them on the moment that they turn away their distrust from Him. And thus, while you all in one sense of the word are called, they are the latter class alone who are the called of my text—because, called effectually, they have not only heard the call but answered it. Here then is a palpable difference between two sets of hearers, that falls to be accounted for; and the account everywhere given of it in Scripture is, that the Spirit, who bloweth where He listeth, hath carried the message with power to the listener's heart in the one case, and hath not gone along with it in the other—that He hath inclined the one to God's testimonies, and left the other to his own waywardness—that wherever a saving impression has been made, there the Holy Ghost has been at work, who, operating not without the word but by the word, hath fulfilled on the person of the new believer that purpose which God conceived in his favour before the foundation of the world.

But let not any feel himself thrown at a distance from salvation, by thus connecting it with the antecedent decree of God respecting it. We are sure that none ought, who feel a true moral earnestness on the subject, and are honestly and desirously embarked on the pursuit of their immortal wellbeing. For though the Spirit bloweth where He listeth, yet He listeth so to do on all who court and who aspire after Him; and though by His work upon a human soul He is fulfilling a design that hath been conceived from eternity, yet it is not with this past design but with the present fulfilment that you have to do: And the matter in hand, the matter with which you should feel yourself urged and occupied is, that by the operation of that Spirit you may indeed be enlightened in the truth of God, and made wise unto your own salvation. For this purpose let me assure you of His readiness to help and to visit all who ask Him—let me entreat your attention to that Bible, which with Him is the mighty instrument, whereby the understanding and the heart and all the faculties of man are gained over to that truth, which is able at once to sanctify and to save us—let me press you to awake and be active in the work, putting forth all the strength that is in you, and confident that if you really do so more strength will be given—so that if the whole force which you now have be honestly and heartily directed to the object, by force the kingdom of heaven will be carried.

LECTURE LX.

ROMANS VIII. 29.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren."

THERE is a vast and immeasurable progression of events between the conception of God's will in the depths of the eternity that is past, and the full consummation of that will in the yet unresolved mysteries of the eternity that is to come. And we occupy our given place along the line of that progression. We form one in the series of many generations; and, in our assigned part of this mighty chain, we can only see a little way on either side of it—because from our post of observation, and with our limited range of faculties, it soon loses itself both in the obscurity that is behind, and in the almost equal obscurity that is before us. Nevertheless we concede to Him who originated the whole of this wondrous process, that His eye reaches from the beginning to the end of it; that from the lofty and uncreated summit of His own omniscience, He can descry all the successions of the universe that Himself hath made; that in the single fiat of His power, by which the mechanism of creation was called forth, and all its laws were ordained, there were comprehended all the events that take place in the history of nature or of Providence —and that neither their variety can bewilder, nor their minuteness can elude the one glance, by which He is enabled to embrace all worlds, and look onward through an infinity of ages. And He doth thus foreknow, just because He did predestinate—just because in the very constitution of His work, there are the principles and the powers by which its every evolution is determined—just because the sovereignty that He hath over it is far more absolute than that which the human artificer hath over all the operations and results of the machinery that he hath framed. It is not the only mode of conception in which we might regard the sovereignty of God, to imagine every one event as isolated from all the others; but which still, at some period of high antiquity in the history of the Godhead, was made the subject of a distinct and authoritative ordination. There is another mode, and by which the sovereignty would still be maintained in all its entireness—even to imagine of Him that He brought forth the universe, just as a skilful inventor bringeth forth a piece of curious and complicated workmanship; and that He furnished it at the first with all the springs and the weights and the moving forces that fix and ascertain both the most minute and the mightiest of its evolutions; and that the wisdom by which He could frame the mechanism is inseparable from the wisdom by which He could foresee all the particulars of its operation: And thus, just as you might say of him who maketh and who windeth up some orrery of human art, and who is able to calculate and to predict all the consequent movements and positions of it at any point of time that may be specified—that it is he who by his own will hath determined through each of its separate footsteps the miniature history of his own little workmanship; in like manner may you say of the great, the stupendous apparatus of creation, that all the facts and the futurities of its state at every moment, are determined by Him who called it into being at the first, and endued it at the first with all its properties. We do not affirm in which of these ways it is that the affairs of the divine government are conducted; but in either way, you concede to Him who presideth over it the entire and absolute sovereignty—in either way you realize the idea of a predestinating God.

And we seldom meet with any disposition to question this entire and unexcepted sovereignty of God in reference to the material world. In all the operations of a purely unconscious materialism, there is abundant willingness to admit a precise necessity, a rigid and unfailing ordination. There is not a more impressive exhibition of this than in the simple but magnificent apparatus of the visible heavens—where, out of only two forces, those enormous masses that float in boundless vacancy, have for thousands of years persevered with mathematical certainty in the courses that God hath ordained for them—insomuch that, even by the skill of man, the mystic complexity of these shining orbs hath been most beauteously unravelled; and, sure as geometry itself, the place and the velocity and the direction of every planet are most rigidly to be found. Now this is predestination; and it positively matters not to the question, whether the actual state of the heavens be willed by God at every one instant, or be the sure result of that invariable law which He at first impressed upon them.

And even in other departments of the material world, where the order of succeeding events hath hitherto baffled all human calculation, still it is held that there is such an order necessarily fixed by the laws of nature, or by the will of Him who hath established these laws—insomuch that even the fluctuations of the weather are not at random; and a certain principle determines every fitful breeze, and every forming cloud, and every falling shower—though that principle hath not yet been seized upon by us, so as that we can prophesy a day of rain, just as we can prophesy the day of an eclipse. The vastness of Nature's variety soon overpasses our feeble apprehension; yet this does not hinder our belief that, apart from life and thought and volition, there reigns throughout the whole of its wide empire an unfailing necessity; and, supposing that there were nought but blind and unconscious materialism in the world, we should not quarrel with the doctrine of predestination. We should recognise the appointment of God as descending even to the humblest event in the history of nature—as determining the force of every billow that breaks upon the shore—as prescribing both its velocity and its path to every flying particle of dust that to our eye had been accidentally raised by some gale that blew over us—as conducting every vegetable seed to its determined spot; and so parcelling, as it were, over the soil of an uninhabited island all the varieties of the produce that it bore—so that it is not according to a fortuitous, but a rigidly pre-ordained distribution of them, when we witness the trees that have arisen in one place, and the tufts of grass that abound in another, and places of rank luxuriance, where nevertheless there is not a blossom and not a stalk of herbage, that has not been set by an intelligent hand, and bidden into the very nook it occupies by that sovereign voice which assigns the bounds of every habitation.

Thus, where there is nought but unconscious matter, we meet with no exception against the doctrine that God fixes all and predestines all; and that each process, however lengthened and however complicated, is overruled throughout by Him—so as that it goeth onward at every moment of time with the sureness of mechanism: And, moreover, if at any instant you were to open your eyes on a landscape that had never been visited with human footstep, or rather that had never been disturbed by the spontaneous movement of any animal whatever—then it is questioned by few or by none, that the whole existing arrangement upon its surface is as it hath been ordered by the will of God, and standeth forth in all its most minute and subordinate details as He hath appointed it. Neither doth it disturb the conviction in our minds that the influences which preside over this arrangement, or rather which actually gave rise to it, are so very complex, so very manifold, and to us so very much beyond the reach of all foresight and all calculation, that we are disposed to apply to the whole distribution of the things and objects within our contemplation the epithet of accidental—as of the breeze which wafted the downy seed to the random situation of the plant that afterwards sprung from it; or of the stream upon which it had alighted, and which carried it down to the jutting bank that detained and harboured it; or of the capricious weather, that gave to the future vegetation the very growth that was actually experienced, and the very strength and magnitude that were actually attained. We do make a heedless application of the term accidental to all these varieties, just because they are far too complex and bewildering for us to follow them in their history, or to trace them to their causes. Yet, nevertheless, when we do summon our attention to the topic, we do not refuse that the hand of God hath been in one and all of these countless diversities—that the flower which hath found its accommodation in the crevice of the rock has had its bed prepared by Him, and that He hath planted and watered it—that over the whole face of this wilderness there is not a hair's breadth of deviation from that very picture of it which was in the mind of the Divinity before that He evoked it into being—that design and destiny, in fact, are imprinted, in irreversible characters, on each individual specimen of botany in this yet untrodden land—that an intelligent finger did assign the precise locality and limits of every species, so that He hath fixed their residence and marked their borders with all the sureness of geometry—and that, confused to our eyes as are these vast and varied assemblages which lie dispersed over some wide and solitary domain, yet, in this whole husbandry of nature, there is positively nought that hath fallen out at random, because under the absolute superintendence of Him who hath the elements in His hand, and each of which renders in His service the precise accomplishment of that whereunto He hath sent it.

We are all abundantly willing then to admit of an entire and absolute predestination in the world of created matter; but it is when the same doctrine is extended to the world of created mind that we shrink and are in difficulties. For example, let this solitary island, where Nature hath so long reigned and luxuriated without a rival, at length meet the observation of the voyager, and be recovered from its deep oblivion of ages—let it now become the peopled abode both of animals and men—let new powers and new elements be thus brought to act upon its husbandry—let the skill and the labour and the intelligence of human creatures spread a refined agriculture over the surface of it, so as to cause another distribution of the vegetable family from that which obtained in the days of savage and solitary grandeur. Now you will remark that the actual state of this territory is not resolvable into the operation of physical causes alone, but is the mingled result of the physical blended with the moral—that the former influences, which were wont to operate by themselves, are now complicated with other influences still more capricious, or at least still less within the reach of calculation—that human thought and human choice now share an influence over that arrangement which before was determined by the elements of nature. Now what the predestinarian holds is, that the determination is just as precise and as necessary after the accession of this new influence as it was before—that though living creatures have taken possession of the territory, yet that all its changes and all its processes are just as rigidly and as absolutely as ever under the sovereignty of God—that, in the dispersion of plants, for example, the flying bird carries the seed to its destined spot with as great sureness as it could be wafted there by the breeze of heaven—that the hoof of the unwieldy quadruped is as surely guided to crush the vegetation which God meaneth to be destroyed, as are those invisible particles that float through the atmosphere and are made to fall in blight or in mildew on those fields which they have spotted with disease—that when the skipping deer hath dibbled by his foot a soft receptacle for the falling acorn, the law of gravitation hath not more determinately guided the one in a strict rectilineal path to that place, whence the magnificent oak of many centuries is to arise, than the law of animal nature hath brought the other with all its light and airy and tremulous motion to be the unconscious auxiliary therein. Hitherto then all is destiny; and even when we pass upwardly to the doings of conscious and intelligent man, the sturdy predestinarian will not quit his hold; but affirms that even after the introduction of this new element, all is in as strict subordination to the will of God as before—that though the now cleared and cultivated farms, and the well-kept gardens, and the beauteous shrubbery of rising villas, and all the comforts and ornaments of civilized life which grace the transformed landscape—that though these form a different picture of the island from that which we have imagined of it many generations before—yet that the picture now, was in the mind of the Divinity before the creation of the world as correctly and as vividly as the picture of it then—that He did not lose sight of it when it passed from the operation of His own unconscious elements into the hands and the busy management of His own living, nay even of His own planning and purposing and rational creatures—that even then it did not pass beyond the scope of God's prescience and of God's predetermination—that men are as certainly the instruments of His pleasure as the fire and the air and the water that are said to be His ministers—insomuch that in the glowing domains of art and population, every item of the perspective which is afforded, realized though it hath been by the busy hearts and hands of human beings, was also all settled and made sure in the counsels of eternity.

And it does give a semblance of great consistency and truth to this whole speculation—that just as matter acts in virtue of certain powers and properties wherewith the Creator hath endowed it, so mind also hath powers and properties to which all its movements can be referred—and, more especially, that the part which man takes in the husbandry of the ground may as distinctly be traced to the operation of a law in his nature as the part which the elements have can be traced to certain fixed and inalienable principles, according to which they act on the physiology of the vegetable world. It is the Maker of all things who hath given to each of them its own peculiar characteristic, according to which each moves in its own peculiar and characteristic way. It is He, in particular, who hath adapted the economy of man's frame to the fruits of the earth; and who goads him on by the ever-recurring appetite of hunger; and who, making him wiser than the fowls of heaven, hath given to him a reach of anticipation through all the seasons of the year; and who hath enabled him to treasure up the experience of the past; and who hath supplied him with principles on which he can calculate and select and determine according to circumstances, and fix himself down in the abode of his settlement and on the field of his industry. And with these busy processes of choice and deliberation and the agency of motives, doth God not only decide the greater movements of his life, but in reality fill up all the subordinate details of it. And thus when man goeth forth unto his labour, he is all day long the creature of circumstances; and the soil, and the grain, and the exposure, and the local convenience, and the right successions for a profitable husbandry, and the facilities that may be opened, and the obstacles that must be overcome—these act upon him as so many effective considerations every hour of the day, and they necessarily guide and influence him even through the minutest details of his agriculture. And it is thus that we may detect a real process in his part of the operation, as well as in the operation of the unconscious elements—a series of causes and effects, by which the instrument man is directed in the husbandry of art, along with all the other instruments that without him carried forward the husbandry of nature—an actual and a firm concatenation of influences, by which he is guided to all his plans and all his performances, and which descends to every furrow that he draws, and every field that he incloses, and every handful of corn that he strews upon its surface. And thus it is that in the opinion, we shall not say of theologians only, but even of those who are profoundest in philosophy, the intervention of man is not conceived to affect the predestination of God—the creature is regarded as but an instrument in the hand of the Creator, which He wieldeth at His pleasure—the mechanism of thought and desire and determination is held to be only one of those countless diversities of operation through which it is God that worketh all in all. And accordingly, it is the article of many a philosopher's as well as of many a theologian's creed, that the newly acquired features of the now cultivated island, were, one and all of them, in the perspective of God from the beginning—nay, that it is the hand of God Himself which hath imprinted them all upon the face of the altered landscape—that with man, as the tool by which His own designs are carried into effect, every hedge-row hath been drawn, and every acre hath been reclaimed, and every edifice hath been raised, and one definite space hath been pencilled over with sweetest verdure, and another made to wave in foliage, and another to shine forth in flowery decoration, and another left in nature's untamed luxuriance; but altogether so as that with the agency of man, He hath as effectually impressed His own design and His own destination upon the whole of this territory, as when without this agency He had nothing but His own passive and unconscious elements to work by.

Thus far have we deemed it necessary, in justice to a topic which, in the ordinary course of our lecturing, hath come in our way, to say something on the much controverted doctrine of predestination; yet, while we do not hesitate to affirm that all our convictions are upon its side, such is our antipathy to anything like mere speculation in the pulpit, that we are glad to dispose in half an hour of an argument that would require a lengthened and elaborate treatise for the full solution of it. The particular illustration that we have chosen is not perhaps the most effective for the purpose of convincing—yet we have preferred it, because we think it the best that has occurred to us for elucidating all the particular uses that stand connected with this article of faith. These we shall defer till a future opportunity; and meanwhile we shall barely advert to one argument more, which even apart from Scripture (which according to my own view is altogether on the side of predestination) might, we think, be most triumphantly alleged in its behalf.

The argument is, that by admitting of predestination in the world of matter, and excluding it from the world of mind, you in fact exclude God from the most dignified part of His own creation. While you invest Him with an entire and unexcepted supremacy over the mass of unconscious bodies, you rifle Him of His authority over the moral and the intelligent empire of spirits; nay, by erecting each of these spirits into a principle of spontaneous and independent operation, the capricious movements of which God can neither predict nor predetermine, you lay open by far the noblest department of the universe to an anarchy that no power can control, and of which no wisdom can foretell the issues. He who hath made, and who sustains all things, is represented as standing by, unable to foresee the turns, or to direct the transitions of all those random and unaccountable processes that are now in the hands of His own creatures; and let the plans and wishes of the Divine mind have been what they may, there is nought in Providence and nought in history that is sure. It is but a poor compensation that He presides over the motions of a sublime astronomy. It is but a poor compensation that the winds and the vapours, and the tides of ocean, and the changes of the atmosphere, and even all the processes of the vegetable kingdom—save when the usurper man hath wrested them from His grasp—it is but a poor compensation, that both the mechanism of the heavens above, and the whole of terrestrial physics on the earth below, are at His absolute disposal—if He be thus dethroned from His ascendency over the best and the fairest region of His works; and if, when once the elements of thought and life and will are caused to mingle their influence with other things, He from that moment is struck with impotency, and must suffer the progress of events to take its own fortuitous and unmanageable way. This consideration obtains great additional strength, when we recur to the undoubted experience which I lately insisted on—even on the might and the magnitude of little things, in regard to their bearing on the grandest passages of history; and that therefore if God be wrested of His power and His providence in that which is least, you in fact dethrone Him from His sovereignty over that which is greatest. You remember the example that we gave from a very critical passage in the life of Mahomet—how he was preserved by the flight of a bird, and by the rapid process of inference which this gave rise to in the minds of his pursuers; and that, had it not been for these two steps in the concatenations of Providence, all the designs of the impostor would have been arrested: and one of the greatest moral revolutions in the history of our species was thus made to turn on the most minute and familiar of all incidents. The doctrine that would limit the predestinations of God to the world of matter, might allow that it was He who hollowed the cave in which the Pretender hid himself; and guarded its entrance with shrubbery; and perhaps even detained the bird for the purpose of turning away the footsteps of the destroyers: but one step remains, and that hath been placed, by the assertors of a self-determining power in man, beyond the reach of the Being from whom he sprung. It all hinged, you will observe, on a rapid volition in the breast of the murderers. And if there be anything there to abridge God of His sovereignty—if when it be the part of man to will, it is the part of God as it were to stand by and to wait on the uncertain decision—if the Creator, instead of foreseeing all and determining all, must thus attend on the decisions of the creature, and shape the measures of His providence on earth according to the signals that are given out by all the petty and independent powers that swarm upon its surface—then never, in the whole history of this world's politics, we will venture to affirm, never was there exhibited a more disjointed and tumultuous government—never have we read of a more helpless or degraded sovereign.

LECTURE LXI.

ROMANS VIII. 29, 30.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

In my last remarks upon the subject I confined myself, nakedly and absolutely, to the truth of the doctrine of predestination; and had no time left for any moral or practical application. And yet it is for a good and powerful application of the truth in this instance that I feel greatly more anxious, than even for the truth itself. It is not your curiosity, but your conscience that I want to address; neither am I so solicitous for dogmatizing you into a right belief on the topic of predestination, as for evincing that, whether true or false, all your present energies should be given entire to the present work of repenting, and believing, and labouring with all diligence in the new obedience of the gospel. As to the speculative doctrine itself, I do not scruple to aver, that while a firm and unexcepted believer in it myself, I do not regard it as one of those articles which are indispensable to salvation—that many are the eminent worthies, and more especially of our sister Church, who have the root of the matter in them; and yet who eye this doctrine, not with incredulity alone, but with a sort of keen and sensitive antipathy—who have, in short, a kind of horror at this most revolting feature of what they denominate a rigid and revolting Calvinism; and deem that, unfit for modern ears, it should now be suffered to be forgotten in the unwieldy folio, whose scowling frontispiece fitly represents the theologian who penned it. I, of course, hold them to be wrong. I think that they misunderstand the subject, and view it through a medium of passion and prejudice which may at length be dispersed. Nevertheless, though we count them in an error, it, like certain sins mentioned by the apostle John, is an error not unto death. I do not see how they can get over the evidence that there is for predestination—both in the Scriptures of truth and in those independent reasonings to which man, even unaided and alone, seems altogether competent. Yet I am aware that to a certain limit there may be varieties of opinion, and all of them alike consistent with reverence for God and His communications, so far as the ability to understand them has been given; and such varieties on the much controverted topic of predestination appear to me within that limit. So that it is not in the spirit of Athanasian intolerance that I have hitherto urged my convictions upon this subject; nor indeed so much with a view to impress these convictions, as to demonstrate if I can—that the great cause of practical Christianity remains uninjured by a doctrine which is conceived by many to be fatal to it.

The apostle Paul, however strenuous and resolute in his assertion of certain doctrines, was, in regard to certain others, the most indulgent and liberal of men. He admitted a certain latitude of sentiment even among his own converts; and though there were errors for which he had no toleration, yet there were also errors, both in opinion and in practice, which he regarded in the spirit of a most benignant forbearance. There were articles of faith, on which he would not give place even to the slightest mitigation of them—no not for a single hour; and when the apostle Peter offered something like a compromise with the doctrine of justification by faith alone, he withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Nay, he called down the imprecation of heaven on any who should pervert the mind of his disciples from that gospel of free grace, wherewith he linked the whole of a sinner's salvation; and yet, while there were truths respecting Jesus Christ and Him crucified which he could not surrender, there were also truths in which he suffered a variety of conception on the part of his fellow-Christians; and so far from scowling excommunication upon them because of it, he waited in hope and charity the progress of a more enlightened conviction in their minds. "Let as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same things." This he would not have said of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. This, for aught that is known, he might have said of the doctrine of predestination. And it is sufficiently remarkable that the apostle Peter adverts to certain things of Paul, not as indispensable to be believed, but what is far more characteristic of our present topic, as hard to be understood—a topic that has met us on our way, and which it were surely unworthy of the fearless believer in the authority of Scripture to decline from; but a topic which we at the same time entertain, not with the purpose to regale your curiosity, but if possible to stimulate your conscience—not to make intelligible that which an inspired teacher hath pronounced to be dark—not to make you more learned in this redoubted dogma than the Bible is fitted to make its humble interpreters and scholars, but to save if possible, to save the unlearned and the unstable from wresting this and the other scriptures to their own destruction.

I have already stated that the doctrine of the text might be apprehended by a series of historical events—each linked in firm and necessary concatenation with the other, and altogether forming a chain which extends from the first purpose of the Divine mind to the final accomplishment of it in eternity. The intermediate place at which each of us now stands forms one of these links. It is a step of that mighty progression which reaches from everlasting to everlasting, and of whose distant extremities we are in profoundest ignorance. We may know that there is a primary decree, either for or against us; but of the decree itself we know nothing. We may know that there is a fixed destination in reserve for us; but which term of the dread alternative between heaven and hell is to be realized on our imperishable spirits, of this we have no information. We see but a little way on either side of us; and from the visible place where we now stand, each in the chain of his own personal destiny, does it soon lose itself, both behind and before, in a dim and distant obscurity which we cannot penetrate. And the question that I have to address to every plain understanding is, whether we shall be guided in the business that is now before us by that which we do know, or by that which we do not know—whether by our fancies of that which lies in a conjectural region away from us, or by our findings of that which is at hand—whether by our vague speculation on the first and the last steps of that process which connects the pre-ordination of God with the future eternity of man, or by those steps in which we now are actually implicated, the near and the besetting certainties of our own present condition? For, let it be observed, that there are such urgent and immediate certainties in your state as it now is; and the question is, shall you proceed upon these, or upon the far-fetched imaginations which you choose to draw from a territory that is fathomless and unknown? A fool's eyes, says Solomon, are abroad over all the ends of the earth; and we appeal to common sense—whether it be practical wisdom or practical folly, to guide your footsteps by the uncertain guesses of what God hath written regarding you in the book of His decrees, or by what He hath written for your present direction in the book of His revelation? Grant that I am moving along a chain which hath one end certainly fixed in the eternity that is past, and another as certainly fixed in the eternity that is to follow. The movement of this day, at least, depends on the few links that are within the reach of your present observation. It is not by looking distantly aback, neither is it by shooting your perspective ahead of all that is visible before you—it is not thus that you are practically carried forward on the line of your history as an immortal being; it is by the links that are presently in hand that your present route is determined—it is to these that you have to look—it is upon the realities within your grasp that you are to decide the inquiry, what shall I do? and not upon the visions that float before the eye of your imagination. And what are these realities? What are the matters on hand that we would have you substitute in place of the speculations about things beyond our reach, and things at a distance? There is an embassy of peace from heaven at your door. There is the truth of the Godhead staked on the fulfilment of your salvation, if you will only rely upon Him. There is His beseeching voice addressed to each and to all, and saying, "Come now, let us reason together." There is the free offer of forgiveness, and what is more, the assurance that if you will only turn unto God, He will pour out His Spirit upon you. These are the matters on hand. This is the business to which I should like to recall you; and would rather quash all your thoughts on the topic of predestination as so many hurtful vagaries, than that the urgencies of a free gospel should be held in abeyance. If you are not able to see the consistency of this doctrine with the plain declarations and entreaties of the New Testament, do not bewilder yourselves. Misspend not that precious time in fruitless cogitation which should be employed in proceeding upon the call of—Repent and believe, and be reconciled unto God. Put away from you the doubtful disputations, and give your busy entertainment to the honest assurances of the gospel. Be content with your ignorance of higher mysteries, and forthwith enter on the open walk of reconciliation—being very sure, that whatever doubt or darkness may have gathered around the loftier summits of Theology, it hath also its safe and its patent road for the humble wayfarer—that it has an offered pardon which you cannot too confidently trust, that it has its revealed hopes of glory which you cannot too joyfully cherish, that it has its promises of salvation which none of you can too surely or too speedily embrace, that it has its prescribed path of holiness which you cannot too diligently walk in.

You remember the illustration that I have already given upon this subject, when I endeavoured to show how the doctrine of predestination could be exemplified in the processes of nature and of history—not only holding an unquestioned sway over inanimate things, and stamping a precise necessity both on the simpler movements of the heavens above, and the more complicated operations that take place in the physics and the physiology of the earth below; but, even when man mingles his energies and volitions with the unconscious elements as he does in the plans and proceedings of husbandry—that then too, there is as sure a presiding sovereignty, which determines the site of every plant and fixes the condition of every spot of territory, as if nought but the winds and the waters, these unconscious ministers of the Divinity, were in play. But, granting this to be a true speculation, will it ever warp the designs and the doings of the practical agriculturist? Does he ever think of the predestination that runs through all his busy processes, or is it necessary that he should? Did ever in this world's history a party of colonists tread on some before untrodden shore and begin its cultivation, under the impulse of such a metaphysical speculation? Did the notion of God's prescience and of God's preordination extending to every movement, supply one element of influence or direction in a single choice that they made, or a single labour that they put their hand to? It might be true, that every resulting farm, with its fields and its crops and its boundaries, emerged, after the busy willing and working of many years, into the very state that had been pictured in the Divine Mind from all eternity—yet the truth never, for a single instant, be present to the mind of a single operator in this process. He was set agoing by other considerations. He is decided by other influences. He never vaults so high as to the first determinations of the Almighty. He never looks so far as to the remote transformation that the surface of the territory on which he now labours is to undergo. He is moved both to will and to do by nearer elements—by the nature of the soil that is under his feet—by the present weather which is around him, and which calls him forth to his toils—by the promises of a climate, which experience has told him warrants the hope of a recompence for his labours. There is nought of predestination in all his thoughts. He may exemplify the doctrine, but he does not recognise it; nor is it at all essential to the practical result of a domain now rich in all the fruits of a prosperous agriculture. It is the very same in spiritual husbandry. It is the very same in that process by which souls now dead in trespasses and sins are turned into well-watered gardens. It is a transformation that may be effected, without one thought being bestowed, or one intelligent regard being once cast, on this sublime mystery. The mind is decided by nearer and more effective contemplations—by the voice of a beseeching God; by the view of an open door of Mediatorship to His throne; by the tidings of peace even to the worst of sinners, through the blood of a satisfying atonement; and by the honest and affectionate urgency wherewith these tidings are pressed upon the acceptance of you all; by the promises of a spiritual climate, now rendered fit for the transformation of sinners—these thorns and briers—into trees of righteousness; for living water is made to descend on the prayers of every believer, the Holy Ghost being given because Christ is now glorified. Let these obvious considerations be plainly and obviously proceeded on; and, whether you have settled the high topic of predestination or not, be very sure that he who strives to enter in at the strait gate shall save his own soul—that he who presses into the kingdom of heaven shall take it by force.

If the doctrine of predestination be true, as I believe it to be, then it extends to all the processes of human life; and, in virtue of it, every career of human exertion hath its sure result, and must terminate in one certain fulfilment that is absolute and irreversible. It is not the state of your future eternity alone that is decided by it; but the state of your fortune and family in this world. Are you entering upon business, for example? If this doctrine be true, even as I think it to be, the wealth to be realized, the height of affluence to be gained, the precise sum to be bequeathed as an inheritance to your children, are fixed and immutable as if already written in the book of destiny. Now attend to what that is which you take your motive from, when you actively engage in the pursuits and speculations of merchandise. Do you ever think of fetching it from the predestination that has been already made in the upper sanctuary? What is it that sets you so busily agoing? Is it the predestination that is past, and which has its place in heaven? or is it the prospect which lies immediately before you, and which is furnished both by the present realities and the future likelihoods that are on the field of your earthly contemplations? Does the argument,—that all is already determined, and there is no object to be gained by the most strenuous forthputting of activity on your part—does ever this paralyse or impede any of your movements? Practically and really, I would ask, do you not resign yourselves as fully to what may be called the operation of the *contiguous inducements*, as if there was no predestination—as if this were a work that you had never heard of, or a conception that never had been presented to your thoughts? There is no such lofty or aërial speculation that is ever permitted to embarrass this part at least of your history; and, what is more, no complaint of hardship is ever uttered by you, because the affairs of your worldly business are all chained down in adamantine necessity. The thought of this fated necessity as to this world's business, will neither provoke nor will it paralyse you, provided that you could only see a good and a likely opening for the prosecution of it. You will instantly forget the abstract speculation, and enter with all the busy ardour of intense and unrestrained faculties on the path of action. Give you only a hopeful enterprise —give you credit, and the countenance of steady and powerful friends, when you embark upon it—give you the assurance of rising markets, and of a demand that will speedily absorb all the commodities which, either by purchase or by preparation, you can assemble together for the purpose of pouring into them; and then, only think of the impetuous contempt wherewith you would overleap the paltry obstacle, if, in the midst of all this glee and animating hurry, one of your cool metaphysical acquaintances should offer to arrest you on the path of fortune, by the assurance that fortune and everything else had already a decree of predestination laid upon them. You would no more think of giving up because of this, than you would think of regulating the history of your present day by what you read of history before the flood. And certain it is of all the operations of commerce, which, if predestination be indeed true, are as much within the iron grasp of fatality as any other of our concerns; that still these are as much the spontaneous doings of busy active plodding and locomotive creatures, as if there were no such doctrine at all; and that, in respect of the calculations, and the correspondencies, and the bargains, and the voyages, and all the other processes that obtain in the world of trade—the doctrine, which some conceive would freeze the whole into apathy and lay upon it a sudden congelation, leaves the affairs of human beings precisely on the footing in which it found them.

It is just so in all the other processes of human life. It is so, for example, in the education and settlement of children. If the doctrine in question be true—then every footstep, and every advancement, and the whole train of the future history of each, are already the subjects of a prior and unfailing ordination. But does this encumber the activity and the outlook, even of those parents who are of sturdiest and most inflexible Calvinism? In the whole plan and conduct of their proceedings in behalf of their own offspring, it is still the operation of the contiguous inducements that sets them practically agoing. No one ever thinks of fetching one consideration to guide or to influence him, from that period of remoteness and mystery when God made His decrees; but all the influence which tells upon them cometh from the circumstances that are immediately around them, or from the probabilities that are immediately before their eyes. Give a parent an accessible place of best scholarship for some rising member of his family—give him a likely avenue to some office of emolument or honour—give him a promising line of business, a promise too that he reads not in the book of heaven's ordinations but in the book of earth's common and every-day experience—give him these; and predestination will no more affect either the direction or the activity of his movements, than any category of the old schoolmen. It may be a truth, and he may believe it as such; but never does he suffer it to bewilder him away from the plain course on which wisdom and observation and a sense of interest have urged him to enter; and on that course do we see him plying all his expedients, as if God had decreed nothing, and as if man had to do everything. All that he needs to put him into motion is an opening towards which he may turn him, along which he will be guided just by the events which cast up, just by the circumstances and things that meet his observation. Such an opening in trade will at once make of him an aspiring and indefatigable merchant. Such an opening in family politics will at once set him, under the stimulus of his parental affection, to do all and to devise all for the future provision of his offspring. Such an opening in near or in distant colonies will, under the powerful operation of interest, bring out capital and skill and personal activity, and make him a busy agriculturist. Predestination may, or it may not, have stamped a rigid and inviolable necessity on each and on all of these processes; but whether the one or the other it matters not to him who is directly and personally engaged in them. He gives himself up to the play of those motives by which he is immediately beset; and under which he is powerfully urged forward on that course of activity, where he strives for his object, and where he carries it.

It is even so in the business of religion. Predestination no more locks up the activities of this business than of any other, and no more lays a hurt or a hardship on those who are engaged in it. We never hear of the merchant, or the parent, or the agriculturist complaining that all his energies are bound fast by a decree; but we see them instantly set in motion by a good opening. Neither ought we to hear such a complaint from the adventurer of heaven, provided only that he too is presented with a good opening. His proper and practical concern is not with the decree at all that is behind him, but with the opening that is before him. It is with the gate of Christ's mediatorship, now flung back for his access to the throne of God, and with the voice of invitation that issues therefrom. It is with the call, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." It is with the honest assurance, that if we return unto God, God will return unto us, and abundantly pardon us. It is with the proclamation of welcome to one and to all; and, lest you should feel yourself secluded by the doctrine of election, it is with such terms as 'all' and 'any' and 'whosoever'—terms that both embrace all and point specifically to each, and by which therefore an obliterating sponge should be made to pass over the hurtful and the withering imagination. These are what you have immediately to do with, and with the question of your name being in the book of life—I speak unto those who meditate the great transition on which hingeth the whole of their future eternity—with the question at present they have positively nothing to do. The merchant would not so embarrass himself: his love of gain would urge him forward to the opening. The parent would not so embarrass himself: the love of his children would urge him in like manner to take the practicable opening. Neither would the agriculturist—his love of a prosperous settlement would lead him instantly to seize upon the goodly opening. And if an opening goodlier than them all—if the plain and practicable path to which you are cheered forward by the invitation of heaven, and along which you have the guarantee of heaven's grace and heaven's promises to assure you of a harvest of glory—if this be not enough to arouse you from indolent speculation—if this do not break you loose from metaphysical difficulties as from the entanglement of so many cobwebs—the inference, we fear, is too obvious to be resisted—that barrier over which the love of gain, or the impulse of natural affection so easily forced its way, hath withstood the impotent efforts of the religionist; for he had not the love of God or of holiness that would have carried him over it, and this is his condemnation, that he loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil.

There are innumerable successive links in the chain of your destiny, and it is only a few of the greater ones that are adverted to in the text. The first of all is coeval with the foreknowledge and predestination of God. With this you have nothing at present to do. God at that time was alone, and what He then did is one of those secret things which belong unto Himself. The second link is the call that He addresses to you: 'Whom he hath predestinated, them he also called.' With this you have to do. God at this part of the series is not alone. He makes a forthgoing of Himself to the sinner. There is now a converse between Him and you; and the particulars of this converse are among the revealed things which belong to yourselves and to your children. By this call He points out the opening through which you may escape from the coming wrath, through which you enter upon friendship with the God whom you have offended. To this then I would solicit your attention; and I warn you that, with the dark and unknown territory which lies behind this actual communication from heaven to earth, you have positively no more at present to do than with the territory that lies beyond the confines of our planetary system. The matter in hand is the call. It is the widely-sounding proclamation of "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." It is the assurance of a welcome and a good-will flowing from the mercy-seat, and made to circulate at large among all the families of the world. It is the good news of a propitiation, the blood of which cleanseth from all sin; and of a Spirit ready to be poured on the returning penitent, that it may both actuate the holy desire and uphold his footsteps in the way of holy obedience. And the truth of God is staked to the fulfilment of all these declarations. He hath so framed the economy of the gospel, that if you simply trust—then either you are saved, or God is a liar. He hath indeed descended very far, that He might again make up the controversy between Himself and a sinful world. He bids one and all of us only put Him to the trial. "Prove me, prove me," says God, "and see whether I will not pour out a blessing upon you." Plead your cause with me, and put me in mind of my own promises. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously. I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away." It is not with God, shrouded in the depths of His past eternity—it is not with God, in that era of high and remote antiquity, where all His footsteps are unsearchable—it is not with God in the secrecy of those unrevealed counsels by which He fixes the destiny of all worlds, that you have to do. You have no right to intrude into these mysteries of the Royal Presence, and you should count it enough if you are included in the benefits of a Royal Proclamation; and you are positively left without one shadow of complaint, now that God hath broken silence, now that He hath set Himself forth in that most winning and most impressive attitude of God waiting to be gracious, now that He stands before you like a Parent bereaved of His children, and longing for them back again. And now that it is God beseeching you to be reconciled, and God entreating your acceptance of His mercy, and God importunately plying you with the offers of pardon and the calls of repentance, and God swearing by Himself that He hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that one and all should come unto Him and live—now it is with Him, and with Him only, that you have really and practically to do.

I can tell you nothing about the first link; but I am just fulfilling the duties of my office when I bid you lay hold of the second. I know not aught of the individual predestination of any of you; but I do most assuredly know that each of you is the fit and legitimate subject for an individual call. I therefore do most freely and unreservedly call you. If you respond thereunto with the question,—But is not there only a certain number set apart for salvation, and what may that number be? I know not how I can better reply than after the example of Jesus Christ, when asked—Were there many that should be saved? He gave no countenance to the speculative interrogation, and simply bade the man look to himself: "Strive you to enter in at the strait gate." In like manner do I say,—Strive you to make your calling and election sure. I am not able to trace the chain of your destiny backward. But here is one link of it—the call; and could I gain your compliance with the call, could I get you to close with the chain at this part of it—then I can pursue it with certainty forward; and, in fullest confidence that he who is called is also justified, and that he who is justified is also glorified, I, in darkness though I be about the secrets of the book of life, could read in the book of your own visible history in the world your destination to the glories of an everlasting inheritance.

Let me beseech you then to take yourselves plainly and practically to that revealed opening through which all who will may find egress from death unto life. Suffer not aught to suspend this transition. Cease now your hands from disobedience: and submit now your hearts to that grace which never is withheld from those who truly and desirously seek after it. Give speculation with all its doubts and difficulties to the wind, rather than that another moment should elapse ere you give entertainment to the free overtures of the gospel, and render a full and a resolved compliance therewith. Christ knocketh at the door of every heart; and let that knock be first answered ere you feel yourselves at leisure or at liberty for the controversies of an argument that has baffled many, and that never should be permitted to detain or to embarrass you—whilst so urgent an interest as that of your salvation is still in dependence. The question, my brethren, is not—Am I by election one of the saved? but the question is—What shall I do to be saved? This is the first question, and your highest wisdom is simply to adjourn the other; and when pressed upon you so as to interrupt your progress on the plain way of a plain Christian, then do as they do in Parliament when they want to dispose of a topic, or rather to dismiss it from their deliberations—move the previous question, or proceed to the order of the day. It is a most idle expenditure of thought and energy that many do lavish upon predestination; and if carried to the length of elbowing out the faith and repentance of the gospel, it is worse than idle, it is ruinous. It finds you on the ground of alienation from God; and, if it take up the room that belongs to the plain matters of salvation, it will leave you there. It is not your orthodoxy on this point that will prepare you for heaven; nay, it may only train you for the panionships of hell—for some of the employments that are on there—for converse with infernal spirits who have gone before you.

> "And now apart sit on a hill retired
> In thoughts more elevate, and reason high
> Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute,
> And find no end, in wandering mazes lost."

Next to that of being called is the step of our being justified, and next to that of being justified is the step of our being glorified. There are some who feel as if here a vacancy had been left in the sense that needs to be filled up, and they would interpose between two of these terms the step of our being sanctified—making the whole to run thus: 'Whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also sanctified, and whom he sanctified them he also glorified.' Now this is as good as done, though not so as to sustain a continued order of enumeration. The called in a former verse are designed to be those who love God; and indeed this affection springs directly in the bosom of the complying sinner, after that he hath acceded to the offers of peace and pardon which are addressed to him in the gospel. And what perhaps is stronger still—the predestination that is spoken of fixes all the intermediate steps as well as the final and the glorious consummation; and more expressly does it settle and make sure that all who are the objects of it should be conformed to the image of Christ. It is thus that virtue here is made the indispensable stepping-stone to glory hereafter. It is thus that a doctrine, misconceived by many as superseding the need of holiness and of all exertion after it, supplies the strongest urgencies upon its side by giving us to know that a moral excellence like unto the Saviour's forms part of the invariable order which lies between the primary ordination and the final blessedness of all who are redeemed by Him. The consistent predestinarian knows that every step in the series of a believer's history is as irrevocably sure as is its termination; and it is not for him of all men to break up the alliance between holiness in time and happiness in eternity. To obtain the happiness, I must have the holiness; and wanting the one on earth, I shall never reach the other in heaven. There is nought, we have affirmed already, in the doctrine, that should avert the eye of the inquirer from the call of the gospel; and there is nought, we affirm now, in the doctrine, that should exempt him who hath accepted of the call from the earnest prosecution of its holiness. Nay, it tells him more impressively than ever that it cannot be dispensed with—that there is a necessity as rigorous as fate for its being and for its power in the person of every believer—that, wanting it, he is altogether out of the way of a blessed eternity—and that, having it, his calling and his election are sure.

This doctrine then does not affect the business in hand. It should neither deafen upon the sinner's ear the gospel call of reconciliation—nor should it slacken but rather stimulate to the uttermost all his incentives to obedience. The direct work of Christianity, either with or without predestination, abideth as before; and unable, as I have been from unlooked-for circumstances, to pursue this topic even through the whole extent of its useful and practical applications, my main design is fulfilled, if it no longer stand as a stumblingblock in the way either of your firmly trusting in God, or of your diligently doing good in His service.

More particularly, the doctrine leaves the question of your preparation for the sacrament* on precisely the same footing as before. It fixes what must be your character in time, as well as what must be your condition in eternity. It stamps its own irreversibleness on the truth, that grace here must go before glory hereafter; and it is not, my brethren, on the strength of your fancied predestination, but on the strength of your felt and your present holiness, that you infer yourselves to be among the people of God—who may now share in the ordinances of His Church, and may afterwards look for admission into the festivities of His paradise. Do then examine yourselves, not by what hath taken place in heaven before you, but by what now you feel and know to be within you. I do not ask what are your attainments; but I at least ask what are your purposes. Is it your desire to be conformed unto the image of Christ? Under the conscious load of imperfection that is upon you, are you weary of sin, and is it your heart's earnest longing to be translated into the element of sacredness? Have you resolved to give up all that you know to be evil; and breaking loose from the companionships of the world, is it your determination to come out from among them, and to touch not the unclean thing, but give yourselves singly to the invitation and service of that Master—who, without bar or hindrance, is willing to receive you all, and be a Father to you all? These are the plain questions on which the step of your worthy communion is suspended; and be very sure that, if fit for this act of fellowship with the saints on earth, you are fit and on full march to the high joys and the holy exercises of the sanctuary that is above.

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* Preached on a Sunday before the Sacramental Sabbath.

I conclude with an extract from the commentary of Archbishop Leighton on Peter, of which I know not whether to admire most—the exquisite skill or the exquisite beauty of his deliverance on this whole topic. But it will require your attention to follow it. It is one of his paragraphs on this verse—"Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." "Now," he says, "the connexion of these we are for our profit to take notice of, that effectual calling is inseparably tied to this eternal foreknowledge or election on the one side, and salvation on the other. These two links of the chain are up in heaven in God's own hand; but this middle one is let down on earth into the hearts of His children, and they, laying hold on it, have sure hold on the other two—for no power can sever them; if therefore they can read the characters of God's image in their own souls, these are the counterparts of the golden characters of His love, in which their names are written in the book of life. Their believing writes their names under the promises of the revealed book of life, the Scriptures; and so ascertains them that the same names are in the secret book of life that God hath by Himself from eternity. So finding the stream of grace in their hearts, though they see not the fountain whence it flows, nor the ocean into which it returns—yet they know that it hath its source and shall return to that ocean which ariseth from their eternal election, and shall empty itself into that eternity of happiness and salvation.

"Hence," he adds, "much joy ariseth to the believer. This tie is indissoluble as the agents are—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; so are election and vocation and sanctification and justification and glory. Therefore, in all conditions, believers may, from the sense of the working of the Spirit in them, look back to that election, and forward to that salvation. But they that remain unholy and disobedient have as yet no evidence of this love; and therefore cannot without vain presumptions and self-delusions judge thus of themselves, that they are within the peculiar love of God. But in this let the righteous be glad, and let them shout for joy, all that are upright in heart.

"If election, effectual calling, and salvation, be inseparably linked together—then by any one of them a man may hold upon all the rest, and may know that his hold is sure; and this is the way wherein we may attain and ought to secure that comfortable assurance of the love of God. Find then but within thee sanctification by the Spirit; and this argues necessarily both justification by the Son, and election by God the Father."

The Spirit will be given to your prayers and to your endeavours. Here is your opening; and it lies with yourselves to enter it.

LECTURE LXII.

ROMANS VIII. 31, 32.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

VER. 31.—'What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?'

In this verse the apostle makes a special application of what he had said immediately before, to himself and his disciples. 'What shall we say to these things?' What inference shall we draw for ourselves from this train of reasoning? He takes encouragement from it, you will observe. It is both to him and to his followers a cheering contemplation, which it only could have been on the presumption that they had part and interest in that election of which he had spoken already, and to which he afterwards recurs in the course of his argument. 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' is a consideration that stands obviously allied in the mind of the apostle with the question of —Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? He must have believed then in his own election, and that of the converts whom he addresses; or, if he did not know it as a certainty, he at least grasps at it as he would at a strong and pretty confident probability. Now, how is it that any man arrives at this conclusion? And while all have a warrant to rejoice in that offer of salvation which in fact is universal—while any of our world may look unto Him who is set forth as a propitiation for the world's sins and be lightened thereby—while each and every of our species may respond unto the gift of eternal life that is held out for the acceptance of as many as will; and may, without let or hindrance, draw nigh and touch that sceptre of forgiveness which now hath been made to stand forth in the sight of the whole human family—while thus it is, that all without exception are invited to take comfort in that redeeming love which prompted God to send His Son into the world, that whosoever receiveth Him might along with Him receive peace and pardon and reconciliation—Whence comes this peculiarity in the case of Paul and of his correspondents, that they here take comfort not in the redeeming but in the electing love — that they indulge in strains of gratitude not because of the part they have in that book of revelation which circulates at large among mankind and is addressed unto all, but because of the part they have in that book of life where the names of the blessed have been enrolled from before the foundation of the world — not because they have been spoken to in that language of welcome, which under the economy of the gospel hath gone forth among the sinners of all degrees and of every denomination; and because they have been singled out as the objects of a favoured and friendly destination, that was coeval with the first purpose of the Eternal Mind, and reaches from everlasting to everlasting?

This is an assurance which they did not, and which no man can gather from a direct perusal of those secrets that are written in the book of destiny. This is a book which is never unsealed to the eye of any mortal here below. Paul and his brethren in the Church had access to none other truths than those which are made accessible to all in the book of God's testimony to the world. They simply dealt with the matters of that book, just as I would have you to deal with them. They made the plain and the practical use of all that is revealed in the preceding chapters of this epistle, before they felt themselves on the vantage-ground whence they could pour forth the utterances of confidence and joy wherewith the apostle brings the present chapter to its triumphant conclusion. They felt the conviction of their own sinfulness, and this I would labour that you might be convinced of—"There is none righteous, no not one." They felt their exposure to the wrath of the Lawgiver, and this I would have you to feel—"How shall we escape the judgment of God?" They felt the preciousness of a satisfying atonement, and this too I would have you all to rejoice in—"to joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom you have received the atonement." They, in the face of nature's fears and nature's difficulties, kept fast their confidence even as you should — "staggering not at the promise because of unbelief, but being strong in faith, and giving glory thereby unto God." They, in the exercise of this faith, felt not only a peace but a power, "because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost;" and you also, upon the same belief, will most surely be made to realize the same experience; and then, and not till then, it is that the evidence of one's election dawns upon the mind. It is only upon your obtaining the earnest of your inheritance that you should ever quote this doctrine as any argument for the inheritance being yours. It is only because now upon the stepping-stone of grace in time that you infer your preference by the destination of God to glory in eternity. It is not till you have dealt aright with the humble and schoolboy elements of the Christian faith, with the first principles of the oracles of God, that you have any right to associate this sublime mystery at all with the question of your everlasting prospects. This election, in fact, warrants no prospect to any of heaven, save as seen by him through the medium of his preparation on earth. It is only in as far as you have laid hold on the link of a present holiness, that you can infer of the chain of your history that it is to terminate in paradise. No one can read in the book of God's decrees, that he has been predestined unto glory; but all may read in the book of His declarations what be the marks of those who travel thitherward. These he can compare with the book of his own character and experience, and he can count upon his own special destination to an eternity of bliss—only in as far and in no further than as he is sanctified.

It is thus, and thus only, that I would have you to reach the settlement of your creed on the high topic of predestination. Many do not reach it on this side of death. Many a humble and genuine Christian feels himself baffled and bewildered thereby; and many such there are, who fall short of the blessed assurance that God hath so signalized them. I would have you go to school upon this doctrine—not in the hall of controversial debate—not around the pulpits of an abstract theology—not among the mighty tomes that have handed down to us the ponderous erudition of other days: I want no other school than that of your own individual experience—no other preparation than that of a heart smitten by the contrite sense of its own deceitfulness, and heaving its aspirations towards Him who alone can comfort and can heal—no other expedients than those of which the very simplest inquirer would bethink himself, when, touched and awakened by the importance of eternal things, he is made to know the guiltiness of sin and the grace of an offered Saviour. Should you come to repent of the one and to rejoice in the other —that transition is all which I want, and all which I care for.

After that you have really and historically made it, it is possible that you may review the way by which you have been led, and that you may recognise both the finger of Providence and the power of grace in that you are what you are. There is many a Christian who refuses the doctrine in the general, but seldom do you meet with a thoroughly christianized man, who refuses that it is altogether a higher hand which hath made him what he is—that it was in the counsels of God to have brought him within reach of that preacher's voice, whose demonstration first arrested him by the conviction of his danger—that it was he who directed his eye to that Bible passage, which told with deciding efficacy upon his conscience—that the volume which first evangelized all his feelings met him upon his else heedless way, by a direction impressed on it from Heaven—that the family bereavement which for a season dispossessed the world of its power and laid him open to an influence from above, was the preparative by God Himself for that mighty change on which hang the issues of his eternity. Above all, that it was the Spirit from on high which gave enforcement to all that he heard and all that he experienced—insomuch that he has positively nothing which he did not receive; and of all the faith and all the fruits of righteousness which belong to him, he of all men is the readiest to say, "Nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me." This man, whatever his general notion may be, is a predestinarian in all that relateth unto himself. He recognises the power and the will of God in every footstep of his own spiritual history. He may not dogmatize on the case of others; but, in his own case, it is one of the firmest articles of his faith, and it ministers nought but humility and thankfulness to his bosom. He rejoices in the tokens of a blessed ordination that he already hath obtained; and the more that these evidences of God's electing love multiply upon his observation, the more intensely does he feel a close and endearing relationship with his Father in heaven. It is not on the foundation of an imagined decree, but on the foundation of a felt and actual experience, that he grounds his confidence in God, and joins the apostle in exclaiming —'If he be for us, who can be against us?' Hitherto the Lord hath helped us, and now He will not abandon the objects of His care. He hath begun the good work, He will carry it on unto perfection. He hath granted the earnest, He will not withhold the fulfilment. We have experienced the supplies of His grace in time, and they are the pledges to us of our coming glory.

This is the period of your Christianity, an advanced and an elevated period, at which your thoughts on predestination may be profitable and may be safe. To take up with it sooner is cutting before the point. It is *wildering* yourselves among initial perplexities that only serve to darken the outset of your religious course—insomuch that I have often been tempted to wish that it had no place in the Bible at all; or, at least, that it never met the eye of an inquirer on his first attempts to understand or to realize the salvation of the gospel. But the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men; and I must confess that, in a goodly number of instances of spiritual distress which I have seen, it was this very doctrine of election which first shook the soul out of its lethargies; that it was the instrument for unsettling the natural man out of the listlessness of nature; and thrown agog by it, as it were, from the deep and fatal unconcern that might else have terminated in the sleep of death, he, alive and alarmed and set on edge by this one obnoxious article, hath gotten an impulse from it upon his spirit, under which he has passed from the state of a careless sinner to that of a hopeful and aspiring disciple. In such a case as this, it seems to have served as the projecting hook by which to fasten the else inert soul to the whole contemplation; and what many, and myself among the number, may at one time have wished to be expunged from the field of a sinner's vision altogether, has occasionally been the very word that startled him as it were into spiritual life, and whence he may date the time of his having become awake and at length intelligent about the things of salvation.

Ver. 32.—'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

It is with great satisfaction that I now clear my way to a topic the most salutary, and I will add, the most sacramental, within the whole compass of revealed faith—even to the love wherewith God so loved the world as to send His Son into it to be the propitiation for our sins. I fear, my brethren, that there is a certain metaphysical notion of the Godhead which blunts our feelings of obligation for all the kindness of His good-will, for all the tenderness of His mercies. There is an academic theology which would divest Him of all sensibility, which would make of Him a Being devoid of all emotion and of all tenderness, which concedes to him power and wisdom and a sort of cold and clear and faultless morality, but which would denude

Him of all those fond and fatherly regards that so endear an earthly parent to the children who have sprung from Him. It is thus that God hath been presented to the eye of our imagination as a sort of cheerless and abstract Divinity, who has no sympathy with His creatures, and who can therefore have no responding sympathy to Him back again. I fear that such representations as these have done mischief in Christianity—that they have had a congealing property in them towards that affection which is represented as the most important and indeed the chief attribute of a religious character—even love to God—and that just because of the unloveliness which they throw over the aspect of our Father which is in heaven, whereby men are led to conceive of Him as they would of some physical yet tremendous energy, that sitteth aloft in a kind of ungainly and unsocial remoteness from all the felt and familiar humanities of our species. And so it is, we apprehend, that the Theism of Nature and of Science has taken unwarrantable freedoms with the Theism of the Bible—attaching a mere figurative sense to all that is spoken there of the various affections of the Deity; and thus despoiling all the exhibitions which it makes of Him to our world, of the warmth and the power to move and to engage that properly belong to them. It represents God as altogether impassive—as made up of little more than of understanding and of power—as having no part in that system of emotions which occupies so wide a space in the constitution of man, made after His own image and according to His own likeness. It is true that this image in us is wofully defaced; but can you think that, after we are restored to it, all feeling and all fervency, whether of desire or of fond affection, shall be extinguished within us—that we shall not then compassionate the sufferings of others, and feel the kindlings of a seraphic fire in the contemplation of excellence, and have all the indignancy of pure and holy spirits at the sight of worthlessness, and be actuated by the kindest regards and the most affectionate longings of charity towards all whom we can soothe by our simple regards, or benefit by our zealous and devoted services? But if all these emotions be ingredients of the renewed character, and it be after the image of the Godhead that the renewal is actually made, does it not prove that the Eternal Spirit hath emotions also—a characteristic of the Divinity, indeed, which beams upon us from almost every passage in the history of the Saviour, who, though the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, yet fully partook in all the sensations and all the sympathies of man; who wept, and who rejoiced, and who was angry, and who was exceeding sorrowful, and who with all His meekness and gentleness still delivered Himself with impassioned energy when denouncing the hypocrisies of the worthless. Surely, if He who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also, then ought we not to conceive of Him as of some frigid and desolate abstraction; but that in the bosom of the High and the Holy One who inhabiteth eternity, there live and move and have their busy operation all the resentments of perfect virtue against the sinner—all the regards of perfect love and of infinite compassion towards the righteous who obey, and the penitent who turn to Him.

With this view of the Godhead, and which we hold to be the scriptural one, let us look unto that great transaction on which all the hopes of our sinful world are suspended. The Father sent His Son for our sake to the humiliation and the agony of a painful sacrifice. There is evident stress laid in the Bible on Jesus Christ being His only Son, and His only beloved Son. This is conceived to enhance the surrender, to aggravate the cost as it were of having given up unto the death so near and so dear a relative. In that memorable verse where it is represented that God so loved the world as to send His only begotten Son into it, I bid you mark well the emphasis that lies in the *so*. There was a difference, in respect of painful surrender, between His giving up another more distantly as it were connected with Him, and His giving up one who stood to Him in such close and affecting relationship. The kin that He hath to Christ is the measure of the love that He manifested to the world in giving up Christ as the propitiation for the world's sins. What is this to say, but that in this great and solemn mystery the Parent was put to the trial of His firmness—that, in the act of doing so, there were a soreness and a suffering and a struggle in the bosom of the Divinity—that a something was felt like that which an earthly father feels when he devotes the best and the dearest of his family to some high object of patriotism. God in sparing Him not, but in giving Him up unto the death for us all, sustained a conflict between pity for His child, and love to that world for whom He bowed down His head unto the sacrifice. In pouring out the vials of His wrath on the head of His only beloved Son—in awaking the sword of offended justice against His fellow—in laying upon Him the whole burden of that propitiation by which the law could be magnified and its transgressors could be saved—in holding forth on the cross of Christ this blended demonstration of His love and His holiness, and thus enduring the spectacle of His tears and of His agonies and cries, till the full atonement was rendered, and not till it was finished did the meek and gentle sufferer give up the ghost:—At that time when angels, looking down from the high battlements of heaven, would have flown to rescue the Son of God from the hands of persecutors—think you that God Himself was the only unconcerned and unfeeling spectator; or that, in consenting to these cruel sufferings of His Son for the world, He did not make of His love to that world its strongest and most substantial testimony?

It blunts the gratitude of men when they think lightly of the sacrifice which God had to make when He gave up His Son unto the death; and, akin to this pernicious imagination, our gratitude is further deadened and made dull when we think lightly of the death itself. This death was an equivalent for the punishment of guilty millions. In the account which is given of it, we behold all the symptoms of a deep and a dreadful endurance—of an agony which was shrunk from even by the Son of God, though He had all the strength of the Divinity to uphold Him—of a conflict and a terror and a pain under which omnipotence itself had well-nigh given way; and which, while it proved that the strength of the sufferer was infinite, proved that the sin for which He suffered in its guilt and in its evil was infinite also. Christ made not a seeming but a substantial atonement for the sins of the world. There was something more than an ordinary martyrdom. There was an actual laying on of the iniquities of us all; and however little we are fitted for diving into the mysteries of the divine jurisprudence—however obscurely we know of all that was felt by the Son of God when the dreadful hour and power of darkness were upon Him—yet, we may be well assured, that it was no mockery—that, something more than the mere representation of a sacrifice, it was most truly and essentially a sacrifice itself—a full satisfaction rendered for the outrage that had been done *upon* the Lawgiver—His whole authority vindicated, the entire burden of His wrath discharged. This is enough for all the moral purposes that are to be gained by our faith in Christ's propitiation. It is enough that we know of the travail of His soul. It is enough that He exchanged places with the world He died for; and that what to us would have been the wretchedness of eternity was all concentred upon Him, and by Him was fully borne. The suretiship was an equivalent for the debt, and the ransom laid down was an adequate price for the redemption achieved by it. When this thought takes full possession of the sinner's heart, it lightens him of all his fears. He feels the charm of an entire deliverance; and great are his peace and joy as he cherishes the full assurance of all being clear with God. He goes out and in by that way of access which hath been consecrated by the blood of a satisfying atonement; and there are a light and a gladness in all his approaches unto God in Christ which the world knoweth not. And it is well that he rates at its full amount the expense of that mighty service which has been rendered—that he deems it to have been what it really was, a costly sacrifice; and that he bethinks him solemnly and tenderly of the deep endurance of the cross. He should look unto Him whom he hath pierced, and on whom the heavy chastisement of his peace was laid. It is thus that the gladness and the gratitude keep pace with each other; and that in very proportion as he rejoices because of his full deliverance, does he feel the devotedness of all his faculties to Him who hath achieved it. Christ gave up His life unto the death for him, so he gives up his life in entire dedication to the will of Christ—living no more unto himself, but unto Christ who died for him and who rose again. And therefore it is, that as you approach these tables, I would have you look with an intelligent eye on the affecting memorials that are laid thereupon. I would have you light your faith and your love at this altar; and when you see the symbols of the body that was broken and the blood that was shed for you, I would have you fully to recognise both the service that has been achieved and the suffering that has been borne in this mighty expiation.*

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* Preached on a Communion Sabbath.

LECTURE LXIII.

ROMANS VIII. 31, 32.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

"For us all." The apostle may perhaps be confining his regards in this clause to himself and to his converts, to those of whom he had this evidence that they were the elect of God—even that the gospel had come to them with power and with the Holy Ghost and with much assurance. But, notwithstanding this, we have the authority of other passages for the comfortable truth that Christ tasted death for every man—and so every man who hears of the expiation rendered by this death hath a warrant to rejoice therein; and that He is set forth a propitiation for the sins of the world—and so it is competent for every one in the world to look unto this propitiation and be at peace; and that He gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time—and so might each of you who hears this testimony embrace it for himself, and feel the whole charm of his deliverance from guilt and from all its consequences. Christ did not so die for all as that all do actually receive the gift of salvation; but He so died for all, as that all to whom He is preached have the real and honest offer of salvation. He is not yours in possession till you have laid hold of Him by faith. But He is yours in offer. He is as much yours as anything of which you can say—I have it for the taking. You, one and all of you, my brethren, have salvation for the taking; and it is because you do not choose to take it if it do not indeed belong to you. It is because you have treated it as the worthless thing that you trample under your feet and will not stoop to seize upon. Or it is because, ere you appropriated it, you would break it into fragments, and either choose or reject of these fragments at your pleasure. All of you are welcome, even now, to salvation if you are only willing for a whole salvation. I can promise nothing, nor can I hold out encouragement, to the man who would grasp at the offered immunity from punishment, but would nauseate the medicine that purifies and heals him—who would cling with all his might to the pardon of the gospel, but would decline its expedients for his sanctification—who can listen with a charmed ear to the report that is brought to him of the sacrifice, but shrinks from that great moral revolution of taste and affection and habit that is wrought in every believer by the Spirit. Your mincing and mutilating of the testimony of God will do nothing for you, but your entire faith in His entire testimony will do everything. And give me the man who is desirous of a full rescue both from sin in its condemnation and sin in its hateful ascendency over him—give me the man as ready to flee from the present worldliness as to flee from the coming wrath—give me the man who is earnestly set both on repentance from his sins and the remission of his sins—and all the treasures of the gospel are open to him. He may come even now and share in all the spoils that have been won by the Captain of our salvation. The everlasting righteousness that Christ hath brought in may even now be to him an investiture of glory. The Holy Ghost, which is the promise of the Father, may even now descend abundantly upon his prayers. The gospel makes no man an outcast, though many is the man who makes an outcast of himself. And so to prevail upon them as that they might move forward—so to make plain the gospel overture as that each may put in for his share of its purchased and proclaimed amnesty—so to manifest the way that leadeth unto the fountain opened in the house of Judah for sin and for uncleanness, as a way that is patent and accessible to every man—so to vindicate the unexcepted goodness of God unto each as that each may feel himself led thereby unto repentance—for this we have a host of testimonies in the Bible; and not the least impressive of these is, that God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him unto the death for us all.

You know how constantly I have been in the habit of urging this representation upon you at every returning sacrament—how, in the first instance, I have laboured to press upon every hesitating spirit the perfect freeness of the Gospel invitation—how I have attempted to demonstrate in your hearing that access to this feast is regulated on the very same principle with access to Him who is the Master of the feast—how even he who, up to this moment, has been the chief of sinners, might draw as confidently nigh as when he maketh his first approach unto the Saviour—how there is no barrier of exclusion around this ordinance which the Founder of the ordinance did not throw around His own person, or around His own office as the High Priest and the Mediator between God and man; and thus have I never felt any restraint in applying to this great festival those precious calls, first of a prophet, and then of an apostle: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." This free invitation of the Old Testament is re-echoed by the New: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

It is thus that I should like to overbear the scruples of the fearful. It is thus that I would divest the communion of that certain air of repulsiveness in which it stands forth to many a superstitious imagination. It is thus that I would have you to regard it in its true character as a feast of welcome and of goodwill, from which no past transgression, if repented of and turned from, was ever meant to exclude even those who, in the darkness of other days, were the most abandoned of our species; and, even now, though smarting under the recency of some sore and melancholy fall—though all trembling and abashed at some fresh discovery of your weakness—though humbled to the very dust because of the temptation that assailed and overcame you, and under the mortifying sense of which your memory still is agonized, and all the faculties of your soul are in a wild uproar of turbulence and disorder—even in these circumstances of apparent desperation, if the sinner can only lift up his eyes to the mercy-seat, then may he move his footsteps to that table on which its emblems and its memorials are laid. The heart that can rise in humble and holy confidence to the Saviour should ever be accompanied with the hand that can stretch itself out to the symbols of His death; and often, have we reason to believe, in the history of our Church—often has the appointed use of these been felt as a precious restorative to the broken spirit—often has the weary and heavy-laden penitent risen from the festival with a reanimated vigour for making good the distance that he has lost, with all the energy of a man refreshed for the toils of new obedience.

And you further know how this latitude of invitation to the sacrament can be made to harmonize with the pure and holy character of this ordinance. Just in the very way that the gospel is at one and the same time both a doctrine of free grace and a doctrine according to godliness, the past iniquities that have taken place in your history form no barrier in the way of your approach to these tables; but the purposed iniquities that have now place in your heart, these are what ought to form an invincible barrier. In coming here, yours must be the very state and the very preparation that are indispensable to every sinner on his coming unto Christ. He is freely invited; but with the same breath of utterance he is told that he must forsake all. He has his salvation for the taking; but he is not at liberty to divide it into parts, and to accommodate his own taste by the selection of one, by the refusal of another. He must give himself over wholly to Christ, and be as willing to make use of Him as the Lord his strength as to confide in Him as the Lord his righteousness. This must characterize his first movement to the gospel; and this must characterize his first and all his following movements to the table of the sacrament. The bread and the wine that he receives there must be viewed by him not merely as the symbols of that sacrifice by which he is reconciled, but also as the symbols of that spiritual nourishment by which he is renewed. And he partaketh unworthily, he eateth and he drinketh judgment unto himself, if to the peace of a redeemed creature he do not add now the firm purpose, and do not experience afterwards the heaven-bestowed power, of a sanctified creature.

You will now perceive then, what the principle is on which all our debarments from the table of the Lord do turn. It is not on the magnitude or the number of your past offences—for the guilt of these that blood of which the wine of the table is the memorial can wholly cleanse away. It is not even on the weakness of your present energies—for that nourishment from above, of which both the bread and the wine are the symbols, can wholly invigorate and restore them. But it is the duplicity of a heart that wavers between its own will and the will of God. It is the want of a thorough-going devotedness to Him who died for you and who rose again. It is a vice not in the performance —for who is there that cometh not short of the pure and the perfect commandment?—far more radical than this, it is a vice in the purpose. It is such a vice in the feelings and inclinations of the inner man as met the discerning eye of the apostle when he looked upon Simon Magus, and could perceive in him a heart not right with God. The compromise that he wanted to strike was between godliness and gain; and, in like manner, if you have not the singleness of aim and singleness of desire—if you would partition the matter between the service of the one master and the service of the other—if you cleave not fully unto the Lord, and are not resolved to be His only and His altogether, —you partake unworthily—you add the guilt of hypocrisy to the guilt of your ordinary transgressions; you do what is decent and creditable, it is true, in the eyes of the world, but you do it at the heavy expense of an insult to Him who made the world, of a solemn mockery in the face of Heaven. Beware of thus aggravating your guilt and your danger—"Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; purify your hearts, ye double-minded."

You may remember that precious verse of our great apostle—"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." There is a close analogy between the sentiment here and that in our text of the day—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

This, my brethren, is the great hold, the great security, if I may so speak, which a believer has upon God. He hath a pledge in his hand already, that to him is the warrant or the guarantee of the very largest fulfilments. He hath accepted of Christ, and having Him in sure possession—and the stronger his faith the surer that possession is—he cannot doubt that with Him he shall receive all things necessary to life and to godliness. God who hath bestowed upon him the greater gift will not withhold from him the less. He who for his sake put the soul of His well-beloved Son to grief, will not fail, now that the grief is past and the glory of an exalted mediatorship is entered upon —will not fail to illustrate that glory the more by the bright accomplishments and virtues of all His disciples. He who gave up Christ unto the sacrifice, will not fail through Christ to give out His Spirit unto the sanctification of all who are redeemed by it. God made a painful surrender when He consented to the humiliation and death of our Saviour. But now that the Saviour hath arisen—now that the bitterness of the deep expiation is past—now that the toil, and the conflict, and the agony all are over—now that the sore obstruction is moved away, and through the open portal of a reconciliation that Christ travailed in the greatness of His strength for the purpose of achieving, there is a free and unimpeded channel through which the mercy of God may descend in fullest exuberance on the guiltiest of us all—now we have every reason for building ourselves up on the assurance that He will withhold nothing which can make either for our grace in time or our glory in eternity. After so wondrous a demonstration of His love, the believer hath nothing to fear. He is on high vantage-ground. He sees in the mission of Christ to our world a token and an evidence of friendly regard that already overpasses his largest expectations. He rejoices in the secure and wealthy place that he now occupies, under the covering of the ample mediatorship; and when he thinks of the pledge which hath been already given, he delights himself in the abundance of hope, and peace floweth through his breast like a mighty river.

It is thus that I would have you to arise from these tables, refreshed and reassured by all that you have seen and tasted and handled here of the Word of life. In eating the bread, and in drinking the wine, you have at least received the symbols of the body that was broken, and of the blood that was shed for you; and if there have been a correspondence between the heart and the hand in this solemn transaction, you have really and substantially received the atonement. Christ is yours, and ye are Christ's. The act of reconciliation between you and your offended Lawgiver has been struck; and you may descend from the mount of ordinances with this song of triumph: He hath given His own Son, and how is it possible that He will not with Him freely give us all things?

This is the very reflection by which I would have you to be sustained and comforted under a fear that may naturally enter your hearts, when you look onward to the pilgrimage that is before you. The fear is lest you fail by the way; lest you should again be surprised, and again be overtaken; lest sin and Satan should have some fresh advantage over you; and, in the darkness of a troubled spirit, you should lose the light of the Divine countenance, and be cast aback, as it were, on that world from which you had emerged, and a fellowship with which is death. The main anxiety of a truly christianized heart is for its own integrity. Its breathings are after perfect love and perfect holiness. Its most sensitive dread is of moral evil. Its most cherished desire is spiritual excellence. Of the 'all things' which are promised unto the believer, this is the thing which it is most intently set upon. That which Christ signalized above every other privilege by calling it the promise of the Father, that is the promise which every worthy communicant is most in earnest to realize—the Spirit given to all who trust in the Saviour—the Spirit that helpeth all infirmities and strengthens with all might in the inner man—the Spirit that ever acts as the powerful though unseen auxiliary of the faithful, amid the heat and the hurry and the fierce onsets of the Christian warfare—the Spirit that, even among the familiarities of your daily path and the hourly occasions of your business, operates with real though invisible agency in the secret chambers of thought—He who writes the law of God upon your heart, and is ever ready, if He only be prayed and watched for—is ever ready with His suggestions of wisdom and of moral energy, and even of scriptural admonitions, wherewith to meet and to conquer the temptations of the cruel adversary—this is the gift that, now that he hath laid his confident hold on the gift of the Saviour, every true Christian most earnestly covets, and whereof he is most insatiable. The gift of the Spirit is that for which he now wrestles in supplication with his God. Like the law which it imprints on his renovated heart, it is more desired by him than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Now this is what I would propose as your defence and your mainstay against the melancholy shipwreck of those who return unto the pollutions of the world, are again entangled therein, and at length fall away. It is the Spirit who keeps all who look for Him from this awful catastrophe. This living water descendeth not upon the heart in one wholesale ministration, but like your daily nourishment, it is dealt to you in occasional supplies. It is grace to help you in the time of need. It is distributed in season, and so as to suit the ever-recurring necessities of the soul. You are therefore not to count upon an inherent stock of grace. You are at all times to go as at the first, on the footing of a wholly void and vacant and unfurnished creature; and it is when you go thus that the promise is verified: "Open thy mouth, and I will fill it." "The height of creature-perfection," says an eminent divine, "lies in the constant habit of bringing our own emptiness to Christ's fulness." You are not to presume on the store of your accumulated energies; you are not to presume on your acquired habits; you are not to shift your confidence from the emanating fountain to that stream which, if not momently fed and upholden therefrom, would soon fleet away, and leave nought but a dry and rocky and unfruitful strand behind it. Your eye must be ever towards that fountain whence all the supply cometh. You may be grateful and glad because of the glories of the ascending superstructure; but you do not lean on the superstructure—you lean on the foundation. And so it is, that I would have you at all times to have no confidence in yourselves, but to rejoice in the Lord Jesus—to fetch from Him all those influences by which you are enabled from one hour to another to serve God in the Spirit—ever to be intermingling your aspirations with your efforts, your prayers with your practice; striving mightily, yet supplicating constantly; fervent in spirit while not slothful in business: And be assured that it is on the basis of profoundest humility that the noblest elevations of Christian worth and excellence are reared.

That process by which the prayer of faith and the performance of familiar duty are made thus to reciprocate the one with the other, goeth on among the recesses and the intricacies of experimental religion. It forms the mainspring and aliment of that life which is hid with Christ in God. He who verifies this process in his own heart realizes fellowship with the Father and with the Son. The secret of the Lord is with him; and in the busy chambers of the inner man there is a joy that the world knoweth not, and a spiritual mechanism at work which the world cannot comprehend. But though they see not the working of the mechanism, they may both see and admire the produce of that working—even as we might have our eye regaled by the beauty of a pattern, though we have not an understanding for the complex machinery by which it is inlaid. Even so it is that the eye of nature cannot apprehend what that is which hath wrought the true and the lovely and the honourable on the groundwork of your character—yet each one of these features, and many more, can be discerned by the men who are without, and call forth an applauding testimony from them all. And be it your care that your light so shine before men, that they who see nought but mysticism in your orthodoxy, and in your high communions with God, and in your life of faith upon His Son, and in your habitual fellowship with His Spirit—that they, utterly in the dark about the secret principles of your character, may at least be compelled to render homage to the visible exhibitions of it. It is thus, my brethren, that Christ is magnified in your body. It is thus that His doctrine is adorned, and that your souls become a living epistle, read and acknowledged not merely by your fellow-saints, but read and seen of all men. They cannot understand the high and the hidden walk of godliness, but they can understand your common honesty. They can understand your everyday usefulness. They can understand the courtesy of your manners. They can understand your patience under injuries, and the noble sacrifices that you make in the cause of humanity. They can understand all the duties of that varied relationship which you hold with your fellow-men. They know the distinction between a good and a bad parent, between a kind and a quarrelsome neighbour, between a dutiful and a disobedient son, between a profitable and a pernicious member of society. Make it clear to them as day then, that your Christianity, which is a religion of faith, is also a religion of virtue—that all the fit and graceful moralities of life follow in its train—and that while it assimilates to the angels who are above, it scatters beauties and blessings innumerable over the face of society in this lower world. Strive thus to recommend to others the gospel which you profess. Strive mightily according to the grace of God that is given to your prayers, and that worketh in you mightily.

LECTURE LXIV.

ROMANS VIII. 31.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The apostle, in the utterance of these words, evidently proceeds on the belief that God is upon his side; and it is a belief grounded on certain things which may be found in the preceding context:—'What shall we then say to these things?' And surely it concerns us to search what the things were, that we too, if possible, may realize the same glorious confidence, and be raised to that highest vantage-ground on which a creature can be exalted—even the vantage-ground of the Divine favour, whereupon he stands secure amid the shock and the conflict and the hostility of all those subordinate elements which be in the universe—and just because he can count on the greatest Being of the universe as his friend.

In taking a retrospect then of this epistle, with a view to ascertain the footing upon which our apostle rests the assurance of God being for him, we shall find that there are two distinct considerations upon which the assurance turns. The first consideration is that of God's truth in His promise—a consideration which lays hold on those who have faith, and which lays no hold on those who want it. What first then led the apostle to count upon God as his friend, was faith in God—a faith that counted Him to be faithful—a faith that hung direct upon the promises of God. Of this an example was given by Abraham, and is quoted by Paul in the preceding argument. The patriarch relied upon God from the time of His very first communication. He did not wait the experience of God's truth—he believed in it from the outset. He did not ground his confident anticipation of the whole promise being fulfilled upon the fulfilment of one or any part of it. He trusted from the moment of its utterance. He reckoned upon God's friendship, so soon as God had made any overture to him at all. He believed ere he set out from his native country, and prior to all the subsequent tokens that he obtained of God's faithfulness in the course of his journeying over distant lands. He believed in Him the first time, and before that he met with Him a second time. The truth of God's whole promise was more unlikely to the eye of nature before that Abraham had got any part of it made good to him than after that part of it was verified by an actual accomplishment. But it was at the time of greatest unlikelihood that his faith made its brightest display and was most acceptable to God. It was because that against hope he believed in hope—it was because he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief—it was because fully persuaded that what God had promised He was able also to perform—it was because of all this that his faith was well-pleasing to God, and because of all this that his faith was imputed unto him for righteousness.

Now this very footing upon which Abraham placed reliance upon God as his friend is a footing furnished in the gospel of Jesus Christ to one and to all of us. "It was not written for his sake alone that it is imputed to him, but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead." The very first address of the gospel message to your understandings should be met by your faith. You should not postpone your belief in the promises contained there till one or more of them have been accomplished. You might see a truth and honesty in all the promises from the first; and, anterior even to the very least experience, confidently wait for the fulfilment of them all. Man's faith should come immediately on the back of God's utterance; and my reason for insisting upon this is, if possible, to convince one and all of you—that even now you may step over to the place on which the apostle is standing in our text, and join him in the triumphant affirmation that God is upon your side. The most alienated of God's rebellious creatures has a warrant in the gospel for changing sides, and that immediately, from a state of variance with God to a state of friendship and peace with Him. With the uttermost stretch of our charity we cannot believe that all of this congregation are within the bond of the covenant—that all have entered into reconciliation and are now encircled within the limit of God's adopted family. Of more importance then is it that you should be told, that among other grounds for the assurance of God being indeed your friend, there is one of which the most hopeless of outcasts may instantly avail themselves—one which brought Abraham out from the land of idolatry, and which should now bring you out from amongst the idolatries of a present evil world—one upon which the patriarch of old entered forthwith into the friendship of God, and upon which you may also forthwith enter into the same friendship, and that without the intervention of any given period during which you have to wait for signs and fulfilments, and for more of the reiteration of the gospel testimony in your hearing. There is warrant and warrant enough for your proceeding upon the gospel testimony now. It is addressed to you as well as unto others. The voice of "Abram, Abram," heard from the canopy of heaven by the patriarch, was not a more specific call than the voice of "Whosoever will, let him come," read in your Bibles, is a specific call on each who is here present to proceed upon this invitation; and to set out, not on that journey by which he describes a great physical distance from the land of his fathers, but most assuredly to set out on that journey by which he describes a great moral distance from the vain conversation of his fathers: And with the very first footstep, we contend, and it is a footstep that should be taken now, may there be this delightful confidence to urge and to animate the whole movement—even that God will receive him and will be a Father unto him, and that he shall be as one of His sons and daughters, as saith the Lord Almighty.

It were doing injustice to the gospel, did we not hold it forth as charged with friendly overtures, and that for the instant acceptance even of the worst and most worthless among you. Even now are you offered the justification that is by faith. Even now the sceptre is held out to you of peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Even now, could we only awaken your confidence—even now, did the message wherewith we are intrusted but call forth a responsive trust in your bosom, may you rejoice in the conscious possession of that grace or favour wherein the believer stands, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is well to open up the way of your direct translation into the friendship of Heaven, and for this purpose to insist both on the perfect freedom and the perfect universality of Heaven's invitations. They are to you who are afar off as well as to you who are nigh. There is an offer of forgiveness of which you shall be held to have accepted, simply by your reliance on the honesty of the offer. There is a proposal made to you of an exchange of conditions, even that you shall exchange your present condition of hostility for that of entire peace and amity with God; and a faith in the reality of this proposal on your part will be sustained on His part as the valid signification of your having acceded to the proposal. It is thus that the agreement which had been broken between Heaven and earth is restored. It is thus, if I may so speak, that the knot of reconciliation is tied. Your belief is the ligament that binds together the parts which had been dissevered. And there is not a surer concatenation in the whole expanse of Nature or of Providence than that which obtains between man's faith and God's faithfulness. It is upon your believing in the testimony of God regarding His Son that you pass from the ground of condemnation to the ground of acceptance; and we again repeat that there is not an individual amongst you who lies without the scope of this generous and widely-sounding call—so that however much God is against you at the present because of your unrepented of and unexpiated sins, even now, upon the instant of your moving from sin unto the Saviour, God at once will be for you, at once will be your friend.

And now that I have said of this transition from a state of enmity to a state of peace with God, how it is a transition competent to one and all of you at this moment—let me but make one short utterance on the blessedness of the transition itself—even of that wide and momentous difference which there is between what by nature you are, and what by grace you might be—between being the objects of God's wrath and the objects of His good-will—between the Sovereign of creation who has all its energies at command, looking towards you with all the displeasure of His broken law and His incensed dignity; and that same Sovereign looking to you with as much complacency as if His Son's unpolluted obedience had been rendered personally by you, or as if His splendid righteousness had been all your own—and so rejoicing over you to do you all manner of good. Let God be your enemy—and He is the enemy of all who have not laid hold of the great propitiation—and what, I will not say is your condition in time, but what are your prospects for eternity? In time you may be comfortable, and along with this you may be careless; and, amid the busy engrossments of a little day, forget the dreadful reckoning and the dreadful retribution that await you. But the danger is not the less real that you have shut your eyes against it; and, amid the tremors of your approaching dissolution, you may be visited with the fears and the forebodings of that which is to come—or, as often happens, the agonies of the perishing body may only cradle the soul into a deeper lethargy about the interests which are imperishable: and, falling asleep amid the profound insensibilities of nature—not till the spirit is sisted in the presence of its offended God—or not till the risen man comes forth at the sound of the last trumpet and stands before the judgment-seat, will you have full understanding of those dread realities by which you are now encompassed. And therefore it concerns you now to cleave unto the propitiation which God Himself has set forth, and for the very purpose that peace may be made with Him, and that from your enemy He may become your friend—that it may be possible for Him the just God to be at the same time your Saviour; and, sinner as you are, to fill your heart with the satisfaction and the triumph of those who know that God is upon their side. The very greatness of such a consummation is a barrier in the way of your believing it. The incredulity of nature is fostered into strength and obstinacy by the very largeness of the offers wherewith nature is addressed. The narrow and suspicious heart of man cannot find room in it for the generosity of Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, and whose ways are not as our ways. He cannot bring himself to believe that heaven, with all its glories, is indeed so open to him, or that the gospel is indeed so free, or that eternity, in all the richness of its promised blessings, is indeed so much within his reach, or that there is nought but the one step of his own confidence in the message of peace that has come down from the upper sanctuary, between the sinner's soul and the loving-kindness of that God who waiteth to be gracious. And therefore it behoves every minister of the New Testament to be loud and frequent and importunate in knocking at that door by which the tidings of grace and pardon may enter in; and often to repeat the testimony in the sinner's ear, that unto him a Saviour hath been born; and to protest on the side of Heaven that nought but good-will to earth is the feeling there, if earth would only respond thereunto, and not keep at so sullen and impracticable a distance away from it; and to spread abroad the assurance among all its rebels, of the God whom they now imagine to be shrouded in darkest ire and severity against them, how soon and how certainly they might have Him for their friend.

Let me now advert, but advert briefly, to another ground on which Paul affirmed, both for himself and for his converts, that God was upon their side. The first ground is the ground of a direct faith in the promises and invitations of the gospel—a ground placed before the feet of one and all who now hear me—and on which every one of you is free—nay, is entreated—nay more, is commanded, and last of all threatened, that he might be persuaded to step over upon it even now and be safe. The second ground is distinct from the first, the ground of experience—that ground which is occupied by those who are not merely infant believers, but who have been believers for some time; and so, in addition to their first faith in God's faithfulness, can now allege their actual finding of this faithfulness. The distinction between the one ground and the other is exceedingly well marked by the apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Here was the trust of those who simply counted the word to be true—a trust competent to you all at this moment. But then he goes on to say—"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Here was the experience of those on whom the promise had been in part fulfilled, and who esteemed that part as a pledge or an earnest of the fulfilment of the remainder, and who could therefore now look forward to the purchased possession, not merely because the promise of it had been sounded in their ears, but because the pledge of it had been put into their hands. They were like men who had gotten a first instalment punctually made good to them, and so were confirmed in the hope of the whole engagement being liquidated. Agreeably to the promise, they had received grace in time; and therefore they confided the more on that which was also included in the promise, even glory in eternity. Now, Paul and his disciples had been preferred to this additional vantage-ground. Their experience was added to their faith. It was this experience which confirmed to them the hope which made them not ashamed. They looked the more confidently to the promised joys of heaven, that they actually felt the love of God to be already shed abroad in their hearts. They had the brighter hopes of a place being prepared for them there, that they were conscious within themselves of a preparation for the place going on in their own souls here. They believed when they first heard of a promised grace on earth and a promised glory in heaven. But now that they had been visited by the grace—now that this part of the promise, instead of being merely counted on with faith, had been verified and made good to their own present finding, there was superadded one ground of trust to another; and they could say with the psalmist, "As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of our God."

Now, my reason for treating of the one ground distinctly and separately from the other, is, that the first may even now be entered upon by all—the second, I fear, may have only yet been entered upon by few. The word of the promise may be addressed to all, and it is the part of all to believe it. An experience of any of the things promised may have only yet been realized by a very small number. Now, I should like not to discourage those who have never yet been on the second ground, and to assure them that this ought not to check the instantaneous entrance of themselves on the first ground. They must not wait for the experience of the gospel till they shall have the faith of the gospel; but they should enter upon the faith immediately, and from that they will be conducted to the higher platform of experience. The apostle and his disciples had been elevated to this platform, and let me fondly trust that some at least who are here present may now be standing upon it—some who have had a finding and a foretaste of heaven in their souls—some who can look forward to the good work being perfected upon them, and that not merely because of their faith in the promise, but because of their finding within themselves a performance, in that a good work is actually begun—some who can compare the memory of the past with their consciousness of the present, and can now vouch for a hatred to sin which they were not wont to feel; for a discernment of Scripture which they were not wont to have; for a distaste of worldly concerns and worldly companionship, the very opposite of that ascendency which was wont to reign and have an ascendant over them; for a love to the people of God, whom perhaps before they nauseated as the dullest and the weariest of all society; and if not for a love to God Himself as their reconciled Father in Jesus Christ, at least for a grief and a self-reproach in their hearts that they do not love Him more and serve Him better. Now, these are the first-fruits of the Spirit of grace, and the symptoms of a coming glory—the goodly evidences of your movement towards a destination of final and everlasting blessedness—the marks and the recognitions of that very path which leads through the pilgrimage of time to the promised land of eternity. They constitute a most precious addition to the argument of God being on your side—for, over and above His promises which you rely upon by faith, they are His gifts which you have realized by experience. They are to you the satisfying pledges of a friendship in which you have trusted ever since you knew the gospel, but of which you have now tasted the fruits and the actual verifications in your own person. You can now affirm that God is for you, on the ground not merely of what He has promised for you, but on the ground of what He has done for you; and while I would have all to shake off their distrust and join even now in our apostle's exclamation —yet it is for you to feel a peculiar assurance, and with peculiar emphasis to say, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

Having thus stated, as simply as I could, the two main grounds on which it is that man may count upon the friendship of God; or, in the language of my text, upon God being for him—let me now proceed shortly to the inference which the apostle derives from this blessed relationship, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'

It is evident that, over against the conception of God being his friend, he raises the conception of some other being as his enemy; and the question is, With a friendship so powerful as that of the Creator, what have we to dread from a hostility so feeble as that of the most formidable of His creatures? It is tantamount to the sentiment which he expresses in his Epistle to the Hebrews, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The sentiment however might be so extended as to include every species of adversity, though it should not proceed from the malice or ill-will of any being whatever. It might fairly be translated into this more general form, 'If he be for us, *what* can be against us?' There are many of the evils of life, though not the most severe and overwhelming certainly, that cannot be traced to any mischievous intent on the part of a living and willing enemy. There is the death of relatives, and there are the accidents of misfortune, and there are the misgivings of fond and promising speculation—and in the walks of merchandise some of you must oft have experienced how crosses and disasters accumulate upon you, and give a dreariness and dismay to the earthly prospect; and did you look no further than to what is visible, or to what lies before you on the region of sense, all might appear to be dark and menacing; and you might figure yourself to be a deserted creature, against whom all the chances of fortune and all the elements of nature seem to have entered into a conspiracy for your ruin. And this is just the triumph of faith over sense—when you can be upheld in the thought that, after all, the evils of life are but the shadowy spectres of a passing scene that will soon flit away; and that, behind all which the eye of man can reach, there is a good and an all-powerful Spirit who smiles propitiously upon those only interests which are worth the caring for; and that all the energies of this world, which look as if they stood in battle-array against your prosperity or your peace, are nought but instruments in the hand of a presiding Deity, who, for the trial of your confidence in Himself, may brandish them over your head, but only to discipline and not to destroy you—driving in all the props of your earthly confidence, that you might lean the whole weight of your dependence upon Himself, and prove how firmly your soul is anchored upon its God, by the very strength and violence of these agitations which still cannot turn you away from Him.

There can be no doubt, however, that the apostle, in the text, sets over, and in opposition to the actual friendship of his God, the conceived malice of some living and designing enemy. From such, he and his fellow-disciples suffered in the persecutions of that era; and from such, all of us are still exposed to suffer in the manifold collisions of human passion and human interest that obtain throughout society. It is hard to believe that there should be in any of our fellow-men a spirit that is truly diabolical—a fiendish delight in all the pain and mischief and dissension and disgrace which it can be the instrument of scattering—a restless activity in the pursuit of evil and of cruel suffering to others—and a Satanic satisfaction in the success of their hateful and hated enterprises. Such a character, it is thought, might do for some deep and darkly aggravated romance; but is never realized among the familiarities of living and daily experience. Yet we do hold it to be a real though perhaps a rare and occasional phenomenon in human life. We think that for the purposes of a secret discipline, a scourge of this kind is at times permitted to appear, who may be the terror of his relationship and the torment of all with whom he has ever had closely or intimately to do—a being, though in human shape, yet in the whole purpose and policy of his mind is infernal; and in the hidden chambers of whose breast the very counsels are brooding that give their hellish occupation to the spirits which are below—a being whom it is unsafe to approach, lest we should be implicated in his wiles; and lest, among the mysteries of his fell iniquity, some infliction or other should be preparing for us—a being of whom the patriarch of old might have said, "O my soul, enter not thou into his secret," recoiling from all fellowship with such a spirit just as he would from the pandemonium for which it is ripening. When the apostle exclaims, Who can be against us?—we are not to imagine that a Christian, in his progress through the world, is to be exempted from the hostility of such characters as these. When fully understood, the apostle says, If God be for us, who can be against us and prevail? There will ever in this world be a hostility that shall bruise the heel of the Christian, though its own head shall be bruised under his feet shortly. For trial and for exercise, the tares must grow along with the wheat—the good and the evil must live together—the path of the redeemed through time must be beset by the contempt or the calumnies of an evil world—and perhaps in the way of sanctifying him wholly, or of bringing upon him some signal chastisement, an enemy may be raised, in whose every word there is deceit, and the very tenderness of whose mercies is cruelty. Yet if the Lord be upon his side, he most assuredly has nothing to fear. The short-lived triumph of every earthly foe will speedily come to an end. The day is hasting when the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, and when there shall be a right allotment both of the vengeance and of the vindication.

But perhaps it is of more Christian importance to advert to another kind of living adversary than the most fierce and formidable of our fellow-men. We think that Paul had such an adversary in his eye; for in the enumeration of a few verses below, he speaks not of earthly plagues and persecutions alone, but of angels and principalities and powers as being against him. He reminds us here of what he says elsewhere, that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. However much the doctrine of a great moral warfare between the Captain of our salvation on the side of righteousness, and the arch-enemy of all that is good on the side of rebellion—however much this doctrine is slighted and has become now-a-days the topic of an infidel scorn—yet, among the Christians of the New Testament, we find that a reference to Satan and to his wiles is constantly mingling itself with the concerns of their sanctification. They speak of themselves as being personally implicated in the warfare; and well they may—for the very field of contention is human nature, and an ascendency over it is the prize of victory. Practically and really, it cannot be a thing of indifference to us, if there be an actual and a busy competition at this moment between the powers of light and of darkness for a mastery over our species. There must be a something incumbent upon us, and that we are called on to do surely, in connexion with the struggle of which the object to each of the parties is the possession of ourselves, and the sway of a superior over the powers and the principles of our constitution. We are not to sit and merely look on as passive and unconcerned spectators during the pendency of a contest by which our own interests are so momentously affected. And, accordingly, we are called upon to resist the devil, and he will flee from us—to resist not the Spirit of God, and He will take up His abode in our hearts—to put away from us every instigation of evil, as coming from the evil one—to cherish every instigation of good, as coming from the Holy One and the Sanctifier—thus to view ourselves as engaged in a warfare of which we are the subjects, and unseen but lofty and supernatural beings are the principals: and, to encourage us the more in the prosecution of this warfare, we are told that Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly, and that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world, and that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; and, finally, as in the text, that if God be for us, there is none who can successfully be against us.

LECTURE LXV.

ROMANS VIII. 32.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

We have endeavoured to make it good, that the encouragement of the last verse might be taken on two separate grounds—first, on the ground of direct faith in the calls and promises of the gospel, and secondly, on the ground of certain fulfilments which personally and experimentally take place on those who have believed the gospel. The first encouragement then might be addressed to all; for it might be embodied in the very first overtures of the gospel; and these should be laid before all for their acceptance, on the moment of which a reconciliation with heaven ensues, and God is upon their side. The second encouragement is for those who have found and tasted that God is gracious, in the change that by grace He has wrought upon themselves; in the pledges which they have already received of a coming glory in heaven, even by a conscious preparation for it going on within their own heart and upon their own history on earth; in the first-fruits of the Spirit upon their souls, and by which the evidence of God's friendship has been carried forward from promises to gifts, from those promises which they relied on at the moment of their first believing, to those gifts wherewith even in this life the believer is privileged.

Now, it so happens that this very distinction is still more obviously spread before us in the 32d and 33d verses; for instead of being enveloped under the covering of one verse, as in the 31st, which we have already attempted to expound, we find that of the two following verses the former is addressed to a belief which may or may not have as yet been accompanied with experience; and the latter is addressed to experience alone. When He spared not His own Son, He delivered Him up for us all; and He is so far given to every one of you, that, though not yours in possession, He is at least yours in offer. In this sense, God may be said to have given to each and to every eternal life, which life is in His Son. And so much has every one a warrant to lay hold of this gift, that God is offended if he do not; He feels it an indignity to Himself, if you do not have confidence in the honesty of His offer; He is affronted by it as if by an imputation of falsehood, saying that "he who believeth not the record which God hath given of his Son makes God a liar; and this is the record, even that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." All ought even now to close with this overture; and, on the instant of their doing so, they are instated in the full benefit of the apostle's argument, and may confidently join him in the question of my text—'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?'

This is an argument of which the apostle seems on more occasions than one to have felt the great strength and importance, and to have urged it accordingly. There cannot, in fact, be imagined a firmer basis on which to rest our confidence in God. He has already done the greatest thing for us, and why not expect, then, that He will do what is less? The great and heavy expense has already been incurred, and surely He will not leave unfinished what with so much cost and difficulty He hath carried so far. He will not make abortive that, to begin which required such a sacrifice at His hand; but now to end or to complete which, will require but the free indulgence of His own kind and generous desires for the happiness of those whom He has formed. Before that He gave up His Son unto the death, there was a let and a hindrance in the way of His mercy to sinners; but now that the let is overcome, now that the hindrance is moved away, now that justice and truth have been vindicated, and no longer forbid the exercise of His tenderest compassion towards the men of our guilty world—now will that compassion flow over in blissful and bounteous exuberance on all who shall put themselves in its way; and He who spared not His own Son, but gave Him up unto the death for us all, is now free and ready to give us all things.

There is an expression used elsewhere by the apostle of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' We are apt to look at the truth that is in Jesus, as if it were a meagre and very limited sort of doctrine; consisting, perhaps, of a few bare catechetical propositions which we can get by heart just as we do the rules of syntax or arithmetic; and which almost as little as these excite any sensibility or awaken any glow, whether of imagination or feeling, on the part of its disciples. It is marvellous how many there be, who, familiar with all the terms of orthodoxy, are utter strangers to the warmth and the vividness and the power which lie in the truths of it; and who, though they can listlessly repeat the whole phraseology of evangelical sentiment, have not yet entered into the life and substance and variety of thought and of application which belong to it. The interrogation of the text, we will venture to say, may have been read by some of you a hundred times over, without your being aware of the comfort and power of argument wherewith it is so thoroughly replete; read with that sort of unmoved torpor in which so many prosecute their daily mechanical task of perusing a chapter in the Bible; run over much in the same way that a traveller passes rapidly along in a vehicle whose blinds have been raised, so as to intercept all the diversified loveliness of that scenery which he has not once looked upon. He can speak of the miles he has described as you can of the chapters. Both of you have made progress; but the one without having had his senses regaled by the prospects of beauty and fertility in the landscape, and the other without having had his spirit regaled by aught in the promises of Scripture or in the preciousness of its consolations.

Now this verse is so very pregnant with these that if I could but unfold the matter aright, it might perhaps let you into the significance and the descriptive truth of the apostle's phrase—the unsearchable riches of Christ. The fruit of our search may be such a view of gospel wealth, or the fulness of gospel blessings, as not only to regale our spirits with all that we have found, but as to convince us that there is as much more to find as might furnish the delightful employment of an eternity. We may be made to see more of the ways of God than are yet known or conceived by us; and yet after all, say with Job, "Lo, these are parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him!" The economy of our redemption is a theme for the understanding as well as for the affections to dwell upon—it being not more hard to feel as we ought than it is to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and to comprehend the length and the breadth and the depth and the height thereof.

But to go rapidly over a few of the leading points. First,—God hath already given the very greatest thing to set my salvation agoing, and what security then is there that He shall give all other things which are needful to complete that salvation! He hath given what every parent who had but one beloved son would surely feel the greatest of his treasures—He hath given His only and His well-beloved Son for us all. In human transactions, the first-fruits of an engagement are generally but a small fraction of the whole; the pledge is but a minute proportion of the final and complete performance; the earnest is a mere scantling of that main bulk which is still in reversion; the instalment only a part, and generally a small part, of the sum that is due,—and yet in each of these cases, there is a distinct and additional hope awakened of the entire fulfilment, from the token that has thus been put into your hands. But in this transaction between heaven and earth the matter is reversed; the pledge is more dear and valuable to Him who is the giver than all that He hath pledged Himself for; the earnest of what He will do in future is a mightier surrender than all put together which He hath promised to do. It is true that, in reference to our own interest and feelings, the joy of the coming eternity may be of greater value to us than all the first-fruits and tokens which, in the shape of grace and a growing meetness for heaven, are conferred upon believers in time. But, in reference to God, He has already given up in our behalf what to Himself was of the greatest value. He has given up the Son of His love to the death for us all; and, having done this, what a ground of confidence that He will freely give us all things!

But secondly,—Take into account the deep and mysterious suffering that was incurred at this first and greatest step in the historical process of our salvation—and that now the suffering is over. Take into account that the travail of Christ's soul hath already gone by; and that now He has only to see of the fruit of this travail and be satisfied. Remember that when He set forth from His place of glory on the errand of our world's restoration, He had the dark imagery of persecution and distress and cruel martyrdom before Him; and that what He thus originated with pain, He has only now to prosecute in peace and triumph to its final consummation. And remember that we estimate the matter wrong, if we think not of His death as a substantial atonement; if we measure not the sore infliction that He sustained, and that drew tears and agonies and cries even from that Being who had the strength of the Divinity to uphold Him; if we measure not His big distress by that guilt of millions, which an eternity of manifold and multiplied vengeance could not have washed away. And all this He did, and all this His Father consented that He should do and suffer, in order to open up a clear avenue towards the restoration of the human family; and think you it possible that, having done thus much with sore and heavy labour, He will not go forward on the path that He Himself hath struck out, and on which He can now advance by easy and delightful procession toward the full accomplishment of His great undertaking? Will the Father, who spared not His own Son from the indignities and the pains of a deep humiliation, and that to commence the enterprise of our recovery to God—will He now refuse to magnify His Son by most willingly giving all and doing all that might be needful to perfect this recovery, and bring the enterprise of Him who is the Captain of this glorious warfare to its most honourable termination? In other words, after so much has been endured to set on foot the salvation of our world, will He suffer it that all this endurance should go for nothing; and will not He who has already given for sinners His only beloved Son, give to them also the needful grace upon earth and the finished and everlasting blessedness in heaven?

And thirdly,—Remember that all which God hath done from first to last in the work of our redemption has been entirely of free-will. It was not because He owed it to us, but because His own heart was set upon it. It has all along been with Him a matter of purest and most perfect freeness — not the reluctant discharge of an obligation, but the forthputting of His own spontaneous generosity. This makes it a wholly different case from that of a debtor who, after having made payment of so much, would like to get off from his obligation for the remainder. There is nought of this kind to stint or to straiten the liberality of God. There is no such straitening with Him, however much we may be straitened in our own narrow and selfish and suspicious bosoms. The truth is, that when He did give up His Son, it was because He *so* loved the world. It was His own love for us that prompted this wondrous movement on the part of Heaven towards the earth, which had strayed into a wide and wretched departure away from it. His desire is towards a restoration; and though there be many who would like to stop short of the debt which they owe being fully paid, there is none who would like to stop short of the desire which they feel being fully accomplished. The thing were a contradiction; and more especially if such was the force of this desire that it bore itself through the struggles and difficulties of a most arduous outset—it is utterly impossible that it will make a dead stand and refuse to go farther when there is nought but an inviting and a gentle progress before it. It was because of God's longing desire after the world that He gave up His Son unto the sacrifice; and, after the sacrifice has been gone through, He will not turn round upon His own favourite object, and recede from the world which He has done so much to save. That force of affection which bore down the obstacle that stood in its way, will, now that the obstacle is removed, bear onward with accelerated might and speed to the accomplishment of all the good that it is set upon. To do otherwise would be throwing away the purchase after the purchase-money had been given for it; and well may we be assured that after God had freely given such a price for our salvation, He will freely give all things necessary to make good that salvation.

But fourthly,—It should still be more recollected, that when He did give up His Son, it was on behalf of sinners with whom at the time He was in a state of unreconciled variance. It was in the very heat and soreness of the controversy. It was at the period when His broken law had as yet obtained no reparation—when insult without a satisfaction, when disobedience without an apology and without a compensation, had been rendered to Him—when a blow had been inflicted on the sovereign state and dignity of His government, and a sore outrage laid on Heaven's high throne by the defiance of creatures whom its power could annihilate or sweep away—that was the time of Heaven's love, and the time at which the Son of God went forth unto the sacrifice. Now the state of matters is altered. The breach has been healed. The debt has been paid. The sinner has got hold of his surety, and may be no longer reckoned with. The law has been set up again in vindicated dignity; and, by means of an expiation for the rebel's guilt, the monarchy of God rises in untainted honour above the rebellion that earth had waged against it. And if God did so much for sinners then, will He do nothing for them now? If in the season of their unmitigated guilt He gave up His Son, will He cease from giving now in the season of their atonement? If, when nought ascended from the world but a smoke of abomination, the price of its redemption was freely surrendered — will there be no movement of grace or liberality now that there arises with every prayer which is uttered in the name of Christ, and every mention which is made of His offering, the acceptable incense of a sweet-smelling savour? If there was such a forthputting of kindness to the children of men, when looked to by God in the native deformity of their own guilt—will there be no forthputting now, when He looks to them as covered and arrayed in the goodly investiture of His Son's righteousness? And if in our state of condemnation then, He delivered Him up for us all—is not the assurance doubly sure, that, in our state of acceptance now, He will with Him also freely give us all things?

But once more. He gave up His Son at a time when mercy was closed in as it were by the other attributes of His nature—when it had not yet found a way through that justice and holiness and truth which seemed to bar the exercise of it altogether—when it had to struggle therefore and make head against an obstacle, high as the dignity of Heaven's throne, and firmly seated as the eternal character and constitution of the Godhead. It was in fact on very purpose to open an avenue through this else impassable barrier, that Christ went forth; and, by a substitution of His own obedience for ours and a sacrifice by His own death instead of ours, magnified the law in that very act wherewith He averted its penalties from the head of our devoted species. And is not the inference as resistless as it is animating—that the same mercy, which forced a passage for itself through the imprisonment of all those difficulties which hemmed it in, will, now that they are cleared away, burst forth in freest and kindest exuberance among all those for whom it scaled the mountain of separation; and, now that the middle wall of partition between God and the guilty is broken down by this tide of compassion, that it will set in upon our world, fraught with the richest blessings from that throne whereon sitteth the God of love—who rejoices over the success of that enterprise by which He might again beckon to Himself His wandering family. He who gave His Son while justice was yet unappeased, will freely give all things now that justice is satisfied; and if, when the obstruction lay between the Lawgiver and the rebel, if then it was that the mightiest surrender on the part of Heaven was made, the conclusion is irresistible, that on the obstruction being done away, there is ready to shower down upon the earth the most plenteous dispensation of all that is good and generous and friendly.

But I feel this subject to be inexhaustible. It is not the preciousness of Christ as being Himself a gift that the text leads me to expatiate on. It is the goodness of it as a pledge of other gifts. Unspeakable blessing in itself, it is the sure harbinger of every other blessing in its train—rich in the promise of things to come as well as great in the performance of a present stupendous benefit; and, along with the full acquittal and the all-perfect righteousness which it brings along with it to the believer now, affording the best guarantee for all the grace and all the glory that shall afterwards accrue to him. There are even other securities for this than those on which I have insisted—other aspects in which the sure and well-ordered covenant may be regarded—other evolutions of its solidity and strength, that might well cause the believer to rejoice in it as in a treasure the whole value of which is inestimable, and to delight himself greatly in the abundance of peace and of privilege that with Christ are invariably made over to him. For will God stamp dishonour on this His own great enterprise of the world's redemption? Will He leave unfinished that which He hath so laboriously begun? Will He hold forth the economy of grace as an impotent abortion to the scorn of His enemies; and more especially of him, against whom the Captain of our salvation has gone forth on a warfare, to root up his empire over the hearts of men and to destroy it? Is not the very hostility of Satan to all the designs and doings of our Saviour in itself a guarantee that we, who have run to Him for refuge, shall be covered over with His protection, and be at length brought out by Him in triumph? It was to destroy the works of the devil that our Saviour went forth, and, after having done so much to silence him as an accuser, will He then stop short and leave him in full possession of his hateful ascendency over the spirits of men? He hath furnished His disciples with the merit of His own obedience and death as their plea of justification, and by which they can repel the charges of their great adversary. Will He furnish them with nothing by which they might repel his temptations? Will He only release them from the prison-house of condemnation, and suffer them to remain as helplessly the slaves of corruption as before? Will He not complete their deliverance from the great enemy of human souls; and, after having so thoroughly purchased their forgiveness at the court of heaven, will He not also give them all things that might be needed to achieve their sanctification?

Never, then, in all the views that can be taken of it, was there a firmer basis for hope to rest upon than that gift of Jesus Christ that has already been bestowed—regarded as the pledge or the guarantee of all those future gifts, that make out for those who trust in Him a full and a finished salvation. Never was foundation more surely laid, nor can we tell how many those unshaken props are by which it upholds the confidence of a believer. We invite you to cast upon it the whole burden of your reliance. In the quietness and the confidence wherewith you lie down upon it, you shall have strength. You will be in the very attitude wherein God delights to pour down upon you of the prodigality of His blessings—when you stand before Him in the attitude of dependence. He will not dishonour the trust that you lay upon His Son, by leaving you to the mortifying experience that it is a vain and treacherous reliance, and wholly unproductive of any good to your soul. Oh, then, lean upon it the whole weight of your expectations; and be very sure, that He who hath given you His Son, will with Him also freely give you all things.

'All things.' We are not to understand this absolutely, but rather appropriately to the condition of one who has set forth upon the good of eternity as the great and engrossing object of his heart. All things certainly which to an immortal being, and who is in full pursuit of the blessings of immortality, are worth the caring for—all those things for which he has a warrant to pray, and which if he pray for in faith he shall receive—all those things which are held out to him in promise, and which go to complete his privileges as a believer—all things qualified in the way which Peter has done, when, speaking of the great and precious promises, he makes them embrace all things which are necessary to life and to godliness—all things that belong to the relation of one, who, by receiving Christ, has become a child of God's adopted family; and therefore, in a more special manner than all the rest, referring to that gift which by way of distinction has been termed the promise of the Father; or, as pre-eminent in the list of those things which God bestows upon His now reconciled children, the Holy Spirit. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts"—a gift so universally bestowed upon those who are Christ's, that it may be affirmed without exception, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And so, were we called upon to specify the most prominent of those 'all things' which

God giveth unto all who receive Christ, we would say, that they were those things which prospered and carried forward the sanctification of a believer, which furnished him with the grace and enabled him to render the services of new obedience—those things which marked him as a new creature, and stamped that holiness upon his character here which rendered him meet for the only kind of happiness that shall be enjoyed hereafter. In a word, the great gift which is in reserve for the believer after he hath laid hold of an offered Christ, is the gift of a clean heart and a right spirit—whereby he is inclined to walk in the way of those commandments that he had aforetime violated—whereby he renounces ungodliness; and that Being, who ere then was habitually forgotten, is now habitually referred to as a Father to whom he owes all filial and affectionate regards. "For as many as receive Christ, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

You thus see how it is that the gospel of Jesus Christ ushers in all those who embrace it to a life of virtue and of progressive holiness. Their purification is as much a free gift as is their pardon. The Spirit, called a free Spirit, is as much a ministration from on high as is that act of forgiveness which passes upon all at the moment of their believing in the Saviour. Christ is given, and all those things of which He is the pledge are given also. Eternal life is a gift through Him, and so is meetness for eternal life a gift through Him. The Christian disciple is as much and more a man of performance than is the disciple of mere morality. Only he performs, not with that strength which he natively possesses, but he performs with that strength which he has prayed for. It is this which forms the grand peculiarity of his practice. Most strenuous and painstaking in all his duties; but there is ever mixed up with his various and unceasing activities the apostolical sentiment, "Nevertheless not me, but the grace of God that is in me." It is thus that his humility and his holiness keep pace together; and he feels himself not more a pensioner upon God for the pardon of his offences than he is for ability to think a right thought or to do a right and acceptable thing.

The two gifts are inseparable. All who are justified are sanctified. All who truly receive Christ enter immediately upon a course of sanctification—in which course they prosecute a departure from all iniquity, and press forward to the perfection of holiness as the mark of their earnest and persevering ambition.

Be assured that you have not received Christ if you have not received an impulse upon your spirits on the side of goodness and righteousness and truth—that if He be not washing you, you have no part in Him—and that in the very act of stretching forth upon you the hand of a Saviour, He stretches forth upon you the hand of a Sanctifier. Hence it is that there are certain tokens by which a man may most assuredly know that as yet he hath no part nor lot in the matter. If he have not yet begun a struggle with sin—if he do not feel a new tenderness upon his conscience—if he be not visited with a sight and sense of his ungodliness—if he be not breaking off from that which he knows to be offensive to God—if the state of his heart and practice be not a thing of practical concern with him—then is there every reason to fear, or rather every reason to conclude, that as yet Christ is not his, and he is not Christ's. If Christ had really been given to him, a change of spirit and of life would have been among the very first of the 'all things' given along with Christ. And if no such change has actually taken place, there is as yet no interest of any kind in the Saviour.

This is a point on which we should like you to have a clear and consistent understanding. Do not wait till you be holy, ere you shall cast your confidence on the Saviour; but cast your confidence on Him even now, and you shall be made holy. It is not your faith that is the accompaniment of your holiness, but it is your holiness that is the accompaniment of your faith. The gift of Jesus Christ is not to you as a holy but to you as a sinful creature; and we entreat the most sinful of you all to lay hold of Him. With Him you shall receive holiness. After ye have believed, ye shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. I do not want to embarrass the simplicity of your dependence upon Christ when I speak of holiness as the unfailing mark of your discipleship. I barely inform you what you have to look for as the fruit of that dependence. Go to Him now and accept of the offered Saviour; and certain it is that, along with Him, you shall be made to accept of a clean heart and a right spirit. But do not invert this order, else you shall never arrive at peace of conscience; and as little will you ever arrive at holiness of character. It is not your sanctification that forms the stepping-stone to your peace; but your peace that forms the stepping-stone to your sanctification. Lay hold upon Christ as your peace-offering; and then the very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly.

Come forward at the gospel call, and touch the sceptre of forgiveness which it holds out to you. There is a virtue in the touch—a purifying as well as a pacifying virtue. There is not merely spiritual comfort but spiritual health in it; and the soul of the patient is more than reconciled from a state of wrath into a state of acceptance—it is renewed from sin unto holiness.

LECTURE LXVI.

ROMANS VIII. 33, 34.

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

LET your first act be an act of reliance upon Christ for pardon; let this act be so repeated by you, day after day, and hour after hour, as to ripen into a habit of reliance; and then shall we confidently look for the marks and evidences of your regeneration. And these marks may at length so multiply upon you—they might so brighten and become palpable even to the eye of your own observation, that you shall begin to suspect—nay, further, to guess—nay, further still, to be assured, and to read the full assurance, that you are indeed one of the elect of God. That you are among the elect is not a thing to be presumed by you at the first, but a thing gathered by you afterwards from your subsequent history as a believer. If you are wise, you do not meddle with the doctrine of election at the outset, whatever comfort or establishment of heart you may draw from it in the ulterior stages of your spiritual progress. When you go forth on the career of Christianity, you look at the free offer of the gospel. You perceive it to be addressed to you as well as to others. You yield a compliance therewith. You enter into peace with God—in obedience to His own call, whereby He now beseeches you to be reconciled to Him. It were great presumption indeed for you to start with the assurance that your name is in the book of God's decrees, which He keeps beside Himself in heaven; but no presumption at all to set out with the assurance that you are spoken to in that book of God's declarations which He circulates throughout the world. The "look unto me all," and the "come unto me all," and the "whosoever will, let him come"—these are sayings in which one and all of the human family have most obvious interest. You presume nothing when you presume upon the honesty of these sayings. And if, furthermore, you proceed upon them—if now you strike the act of reconciliation, and forthwith enter upon that walk by which they who receive Christ, and receive along with Him power to become the children of God, are sure to separate themselves from the children of the world; and pray for grace that you may be upheld and carried forward therein; and combine a life of activity with a life of prayer—then, and after perhaps many months of successful perseverance, you may talk of your election, because now you can read it, not in the book of life that is in heaven, but in the book of your own history upon earth—not that you have drawn out the secret from among the archives of the upper sanctuary, but because now it stands palpably engraven upon a character the light of which shines before the eye of the world, and which is read and known of all men—not that you have access to that tablet which has been inscribed from eternity by the finger of God, but that you have access to the tablet of your own heart, and, by the eye of conscience, can discern thereupon the virtues of the new creature, inscribed by the Spirit of God within the period of your own recollection. Even the apostle went no higher than this when judging of the state of his own converts. Their election was to him not a thing of presumption but a thing of inference—drawn, not from what he guessed, but from what he saw—brought, not from those third heavens which he had at one time visited, but lying palpably before him and within the precincts of his own earthly home. When he tells the Thessalonians that he knew their election, he tells them how he knew it—"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and were ensamples to all." He concluded them to be of the elect, not from any access that he had to a book of mysteries, but simply from the manner of men they were. It was not because of any high communication that he had with heaven upon the subject; but because of the daily companionship that he had with his disciples, and in virtue of which he saw the very things that others saw also; and observed nothing else or nothing more than those evidences of faith, those graces of holy and new-born creatures, which were known and read of all men.

My anxiety is that you do not embarrass yourselves with this matter of election—for there is positively nothing in the doctrine which ought to encumber or in any way to darken the plain and practical work of your Christianity. What I fear is that some may founder at the outset of their discipleship by prematurely and previously meddling with it. I desire that if they feel any speculative difficulty about it now, they may not waste their strength on the business of resolving it, but set out on the scholarship of the gospel in a plain way, and leave their election to be gathered afterwards from the progress which they have made in that way—which is neither more nor less than the way of holiness. Then they may both perceive a consistency and feel a most precious comfort in the doctrine; but now, and I speak to those who are meditating an entrance on that path which leadeth unto heaven, now their concern is to accept of Christ as He is freely offered to them in the gospel, and to take full encouragement from the reasoning of our preceding text, "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up unto the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" I would have them to close alike with the pledge and the promise; and on the high vantage-ground of Christ being theirs, I would have their hearts to be gladdened even now with the assurance of faith, and thence that they should pass forward to the assurance that cometh from experience—giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure, and assiduously labouring at those things of which it is said in the New Testament, that if a man do these things he shall never fall.

The point at which God begins in the matter of our salvation is not the point at which man begins. The apostle assigns the order of God's procedure when he says, "Whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate, and whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified." It is at the call that man's part commences. Let him listen to the call, let him yield a compliance with the call, let him take both the comfort and direction of the call; understanding it to be both a call from wrath unto acceptance, and a call from sin unto righteousness. It were well that he kept by his own share of the process, and encroached not on the part or the prerogative of God. These ambitious speculations about God's eternal decree and man's eternal destiny often argue a creature misconceiving his own place and making himself like unto his Creator. He in fact comes in at the middle between the decree that went before and the destiny that comes after; and, alike ignorant of both at the outset of his Christianity, his distinct and only concern is with the matters that are in hand, with the guilt that can be charged upon his person, with the vengeance that lowers upon his prospects, with the offered interposition of a Saviour to cleanse away the one and wholly to avert the other, with the honest invitation of that Saviour to cast upon Him the burden of every fear, and to make use of Him as the appointed Mediator whose business it is both to reconcile and to sanctify. This is the opening at which man is admitted; and be very sure that you misunderstand the gospel, and are entangling yourselves with mysteries that you would be greatly better to abstain from, if you have any other conception of it than that there is most wide and welcome admittance for you all; and, let your obscurities be what they may about that high transcendental process which connects the first purpose of the Divine mind with your final place in eternity, there should at least be no obscurity in that process which you have personally and individually to do with, and by which it is that whosoever believeth shall be justified, and whosoever is justified shall be sanctified, and whosoever is sanctified shall be glorified.

I would therefore say to all who profess their faith in Christ, that the great business on hand is their sanctification. And it is one of the 'all things' which God gives freely along with His Son to all who believe upon Him. It is this, my brethren, which constitutes the great peculiarity of their practical habit. They work, not upon the strength which they natively possess, but upon the strength which they have prayed for—given no doubt with freeness, but because asked in faith; and leading to vigorous obedience, but from a vigour that is infused, and not from a vigour which properly or originally belongs to them. This is the secret thing in which the great strength of a Christian lies. He works mightily, because the grace of God works in him mightily; and one of the most beautiful harmonies in the experience of every true Christian is the accordancy that obtains between the worth of his performances and the fervency of his prayers. It is in this walk of secrecy that the secret of the Lord is at length made known to the believer; and in those multiplied exchanges which take place between prayer and the answer of prayer, he reads the tokens of his coming destination. As the present grace brightens upon his person, the future glory brightens to his hopes. His humility and his holiness keep pace together—till from the increasing splendour of the one, he may without violence done to the other conclude that his election is of God. He ascends from the platform of faith to the higher platform of experience; and though, even on the former, he may join the apostle in that strain of triumph wherewith he brings this magnificent chapter to a close—yet it is from the latter, because the more advanced and loftier elevation, that he has the fullest confidence in saying, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?'

'It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?' I have already said all that I mean at present in relation to the first clause of the verse, and shall now proceed to a few observations on this last clause of it. I fear that it is to a very small degree experimentally known, how much the light and love and liberty of a Christian's mind depend on the sense that he has of his justification; and that he is in his very best and healthiest condition, when, reviewing the grounds of this justification, he feels his security to be riveted as it were, and himself securely resting upon the strength of them. There is one aspect of justification that is peculiarly fitted to impress a comfort, and a clear impression of deliverance, on the heart of a believer—even the aspect set before us in the text, and where it is stated as proceeding directly and of His own personal act from God Himself. 'It is God that justifieth.' It is He, to whom he was liable, declaring that all was fully paid. It is He, who alone was entitled to make the charge against us, declaring how amply and conclusively we stood discharged from all further reckoning on account of our iniquities. It is He, who before was our offended Lawgiver, Himself undertaking our cause, and pronouncing with His own voice upon the goodness of it. It is the God from whom at one time we had nought to apprehend but the emphatic condemnation and the overwhelming vengeance—it is He filling His mouth with arguments upon our side, and pleading our cause, and protesting how much and how completely He is satisfied. It is our vindication coming from the very quarter whence our vengeance was looked for; and that Being who alone had the right to accuse, not merely acquitting and so withdrawing from us all the dishonour that is due to guilt, but raising us above the midway state of innocence, and regarding us with all the positive favour, and as entitled to all the positive regard that is due to righteousness. It is He who might have wreaked upon us His sorest displeasure, now telling how much He is pleased with us, and how rightly we are privileged to obtain from Him the rewards of a happy and honourable eternity. It is He of whom we might well have dreaded, that when the arm of His justice was lifted up, it would be lifted up to destroy—it is Himself saying, that this very justice demanded not only our exoneration from all penalty, but our preferment to the glories that are due to righteousness. They who have felt the terrors of the law, they who have been stung with the arrows of self-reproach, and alive to the miseries of their spiritual condition, have shrunk from the dreaded eye of a judge and an avenger, as it took cognisance of all their ungodliness—they who have laboured under the agonies of a burdened conscience, and to whose inner man this witness hath rung the alarm of an angry God and of His utter intolerance of evil,—they can report how blessed the emancipation is, when, through faith in the tidings of the gospel, they come to see that the whole account between them and the Lawgiver is reversed; and that He who before challenged them because of their offence, now challenges the whole universe to make good one charge or one ground of condemnation against them—when from His own mouth they hear how valid is the plea that now they have got hold of, and how much He has reason to be satisfied—when, in the precious doctrine of our redemption, they are made to perceive that the suretiship was an equivalent for the debt, and the atonement by Christ a full reparation to the dignity of Heaven for all the outrage which sinners had inflicted on it; and so that all is clear with God, who now can at once be a just God and a Saviour—can be just while the justifier of those who believe in Jesus—justifying them freely by His grace through the redemption that is in His own Son.

I might expatiate further upon how thoroughly the conscience is unburdened of its guilt by the very Being against whom the guilt has been contracted, thus taking the work of our vindication into His own hands; but I now pass on to remark upon that tendency which there is in us to overlook the direct interest that God the Father has felt and taken all along in the matter of our salvation. We are apt to regard Him as having no great will for our deliverance till that will was wrought upon and prevailed over by the services of the Mediator in our behalf—that with Him lay all the displeasure which wreaks itself upon a work of vengeance, while with His Son lay all the delight which compassion feels in a work of mercy—that to the one there belongeth the jealousy of a vindictive nature, while to the other there belongeth the engaging generosity of a benevolent nature: and thus I fear, that, as the general effect in many instances of the whole contemplation, the government of Heaven is conceived to be in the hands of an inflexible tyrant, who, at the same time, has had his severity often appeased and turned away by a Son of popular and endearing qualities; and under whose administration it is that the character of the divine jurisprudence is disarmed of all those terrors by which it would else have been encompassed. We greatly fear that, along with the general truth of their contemplation, there is a wrong impression of the Godhead; and that, along with the truth and justice and holiness of the Lawgiver, there are not seen the tenderness that He feels toward His own offspring—the softness and sincerity of His parental longings after the children who have wandered in the errors of their disobedience away from Him.

Now, to rectify this impression and restore you to a juster sense of that great Being with whom you have to do, I would have you to gather from Scripture the part He has taken in the whole recovery of our fallen world. The pity of God has in fact been working upon our side from the very outset of the human apostasy; and you do Him wrong—you bear in your heart the hardest and most injurious thoughts of Him, if you conceive of Him otherwise than as one bereaved of His family, and bent on the object of calling them back again. It is true that, for what in reference to the government of His moral and intelligent creation may significantly enough be called 'reasons of State'—it is true that, to uphold the dignity of His throne—it is true that, to vindicate the attributes of His nature, and to save the universe which He had thrown around Him from the spectacle of a dishonoured law and a degraded Sovereign,—there behoved, ere sin could be passed by, there behoved to be a sacrifice. But with whom did this way of reconciliation originate? With God Himself who found out the ransom—with Him who so loved the world as to send His only begotten Son into it. At whose expense was the sacrifice made? Had the Father, think you, to bear none of it, when He spared not the Son of His love, but delivered Him up unto the death for us all? Was there no struggle, do you imagine, in the bosom of the Divinity, when He thus surrendered the object of His dearest affection, and laid upon Him the full weight of the world's atonement? In the sufferings of Christ will you overlook the palpable expression of regard for our alienated species manifested by Him who consented to these sufferings?—and after looking to this transaction in all its relations and its bearings, will you refuse to allow that, while judgment is the strange though needful work of the Almighty, mercy after all is His darling attribute; and that to strike out an open conveyance by which it may be poured exuberantly over the face of the whole earth was indeed a grand design in that economy of redemption, which Himself did frame and which Himself hath instituted. All along He has taken a direct and an interested part in the object of our world's restoration. He did not wait in passive and unmoved indifference till another should interfere; or cherish the stern purpose of revenge within His bosom till another should step forward and satiate the wrath that else was unappeasable. The truth of Heaven, we admit, and the stable interest of Heaven's high monarchy, did require an expiation; but it was the love of God Himself that prompted the undertaking—it was in love that He prosecuted it through all its obstacles and its hard necessities—it was in earnest busy and persevering love that He carried forward the enterprise from one step to another; and no sooner was the atonement rendered, and the great moral difficulty resolved whereby a just God might reinstate the sinner in acceptance who had made open defiance to the authority of His moral government—no sooner were the great sanctions and securities of this government provided for than He opened the prison-door of the grave and raised to His throne of Mediatorship the once crucified but now exalted Saviour—no sooner was the plea of His everlasting righteousness brought in, than Himself laid hold of it; and it is now His delight to use it for the purpose of our vindication—so that God Himself asserts for us the merits of His Son's obedience; and, instead of dissevering Him from the work of our salvation, we have the warrant of apostolical example for saying that God Himself affirms our cause, and that it is God Himself who justifies.

That righteousness which Christ brought in is termed in various places 'the righteousness of God.' The Jews stumbled and fell because they sought to be justified by their own righteousness, and would not submit to the righteousness of God. But how great our security, if, instead of being found in our own righteousness, we are found in that which God calls His own! Well may He be said to justify those who believe, when He holds them to be invested with a righteousness which it is His part to vindicate, because to Himself it belongs—dear to Him therefore as His own character, and as ready to be asserted and made good by Him in the eyes of a whole universe as the attributes of His own nature.

Over against and in counterpart to the office of God as our justifier, there is put the question—'Who is he that condemneth?'—suggesting the idea of another and an opposite party who felt an interest in our guilt and was intent on making it good—who had charges to prefer, and laboured after the establishment of these charges—who delighted in the work of accusation, and felt a satisfaction and a triumph should he succeed in this his favourite employment. It instantly recalls the title which is given to our great adversary in the Book of Revelation, as the accuser of the brethren; and in the history of Job there is given a very forcible exhibition of the characteristic pleasure that he feels in pleading on the side of condemnation. We can fancy an interest in this, because, by every case in which he fails of his object, he is abridged of his monarchy; and each who, either under his own personal righteousness or under the provided righteousness of the gospel stands justified in the sight of God, is one man more wrested from the thraldom of his power. But we allude to this, not for the purpose of remarking on the gratification that every instance of made out and established guilt yields to his ambition, but on the gratification that it yields to his malice. In like manner, as I would lure you to virtue by setting forth the graces of its pure and perfect exemplification in Christ—so I would warn you against all vice by setting forth the hideousness of its deformity in the picture that is given of him whom Christ came to destroy; and, more especially, I would have you to understand that satisfaction in another's guilt is diabolical—that in the complacency which is felt by some on the discovery of a neighbour's weakness or his crime, there is that which savours of the spirit and the morale of pandemonium—that even in the zest which is so currently felt when scandal mixes up of its infusion with the gossip of an assembled party, there are the distinct traces of a contagion from below—that there is a secret exultation of heart on some humiliating exposure of an acquaintance, which is absolutely fiendish; nor am I aware of any test that so decisively fixes the distinction between a good and an evil spirit in man, as the emotion which arises in his bosom when there is brought to his ears the delinquency of one to whom he had been accustomed to yield the homage of unimpeached character. The grief of the former and the gladness of the latter serve to mark two characteristics of the human heart, which stand as opposed as do the elements of light and darkness. It is said of charity that it rejoices not in iniquity. But in the hateful temperament which I am now labouring to expose, there is upon the sight or the report of such iniquity a hellish joy—a gleam of malignant triumph that is peculiarly hideous; and were I called to fasten on the one trait that forms the most sure and specific indication of a Satanic heart, I would say that never is it given forth so unequivocally as by him who, on the first opening to a brothers' humiliation or disgrace, would eagerly seize upon it, and rejoice in the hold that he had gotten—who would now delight himself with the ignominy of him, on whom he wont to lavish the hypocrisies of his seeming friendship; and, like that great father of lies to whom he bears a family resemblance so strikingly appropriate, would convert the base advantage into an instrument by which he might tyrannize and entangle and destroy.

'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.' I shall not expatiate further on the death of Christ as the basis of our justification; but only advert to the way in which the argument for our confidence is made more complete and conclusive still by His resurrection. Instead of looking to His death, let us look rather to His having risen again. In a former verse of this Epistle where He is said to have been delivered for our offences, He is said to have risen again for our justification. And it would greatly tend to augment your security did you only realize the contemplation of a now alive and risen Saviour, at the Lawgiver's right hand—were the eye of your faith open to behold Him, sitting and holding converse with His Father there—could you only represent to yourself the present and the actual state of matters in the upper Sanctuary, where He, who by His own death expiated the sinner's guilt, now interposes with God that the sinner's trust might not be put to shame—where He who was Himself the surety can allege the debt to have been fully paid; and hands up His people's prayers to the seat of the Eternal, mingled with the incense of His own merits, accompanied with the remembrance and the plea of His own sacrifice. This is a topic on which I cannot expect the unbeliever to sympathize—for he would need to have a spiritual revelation of the objects, ere he could take on the distinct or the vivid impression of them. But only grant of any human creature that he saw this to be a reality, and with what a light and unburdened heart he may rejoice and be in confidence before God! Let him but figure the things which are above as we have now represented them—let him take a correct view of Heaven's mercy-seat—let him look to the Throne of Grace as it is now constituted; and, if he only see it as it is, what should restrain him from entering with all boldness thereunto? The God who is upon it, waiting to be gracious—the Mediator who is beside it, beckoning with kindliest welcome the chief of sinners to draw nigh, and undertaking to be the Advocate of all who shall put their cause for eternity into His hands—the Father delighting to honour the Son and give full effect to His great enterprise—the Son presenting to His Father another and another application for mercy; and with this resistless argument of the law itself being more proudly magnified by an act of pardon sealed with the blood of His own atonement, than it ever would have been by the obedience of the transgressor for whom He pleads—the perfect unity of heart and of counsel between Him who intercedes for mercy, and Him who judgeth in righteousness—and the golden harmony that now awaketh among all the attributes of the Godhead, when, through Him that liveth for ever after the order of Melchisedec, His full and His finished salvation is accorded to the offender. It is by this wondrous economy of a perpetual and consecrated priesthood that such music is now heard in heaven; and that, in sweetest concord with the whole of Heaven's jurisprudence, love for the sinner mingles and is at one with the now vindicated majesty of holiness and truth. The believer, before the eye of whose enlightened understanding these things stand in open and convincing manifestation, feels all the glory of an elate confidence as he looks to the grounds and the guarantees of his safety; but then does he chiefly rejoice with joy exceeding and full of glory, when he looks to Him who was dead and is alive again. It is true that by His obedience unto death He has furnished every sinner of the world with the materials of a most substantial and satisfying plea, but by rising again He has Himself become the pleader; and let us not wonder if the apostle himself felt as if ascending upon a higher vantage-ground, when, passing from the consideration of the death of Christ, he so exultingly adds—'Yea rather, He is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us.'

I may just here advert to that historical circumstance which is connected with the resurrection of the Saviour — even that it was achieved by a forthputting of direct and personal agency on the part of the Father. On this subject we have several express testimonies in the Bible. "Whom God hath raised up." "This Jesus hath God raised up." "Being by the right hand of God exalted." "Whom God hath raised from the dead." "Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." "Wherefore also God hath highly exalted him." There are many similar testimonies, and the believer has not overlooked the preciousness of them. To him all Scripture is profitable; and the information of those scriptures which have now been specifically cited has not been without its use in the establishment of his faith. They prove by a striking historical event that the justice of God has been satisfied—that He has accepted of the sacrifice as a full and a finished expiation—that in releasing our Surety from the imprisonment of the grave, He has now ceased from all further legal demand upon us—that in placing Him by His own side in heaven, He testifies His complete approval of all that has been done for the salvation of the world,—in a word, that the great errand has been fulfilled; and that, with the now admitted presence of our forerunner within the veil to plead the accomplishment of it, nothing is wanting to the confidence wherewith we may now leave our cause in His hand, and look for the sure mercies of David.

LECTURE LXVII.

ROMANS VIII. 35-39.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

To have the precise understanding of this passage, you should remember that the love of Christ in verse 35, and afterwards the love of God in verse 39, may be understood in two senses—either as signifying His love to us, or our love to Him. The whole context seems to decide for the first of these meanings—as in that part of it which goes before, it is of God's dealings with, and regards to His elect; it is of His being upon their side; it is of the surrender that He made in their behalf, when He gave up His Son unto the death, and with Him shall freely give them all things; it is of Christ dying and interceding for our good; it is of the love that is felt in heaven and is pointed downward to earth, and not of the love that is felt on earth and is pointed upward to heaven, that the argument is held: and in that part of the context which follows, it is still of Him who loved us that he speaks. Notwithstanding, however, we shall find, I think, on a narrower examination of the whole passage, that our love to Him is embraced therein, though it be His love to us that is more directly and obviously expressed by it.

You will observe that there is nothing in all the adversities which Paul enumerates that would, in the first instance, tend to effect a separation between Christ's love to us and our own persons. The tribulation and the distress and the persecution and the famine and the nakedness and the peril and the sword, to all of which the Christians of that day lay so peculiarly exposed—there was nought in these that could of itself alienate the regard of the Saviour from those who had enlisted themselves as His followers and friends; but everything, on the contrary, to enhance the interest and the tenderness which He felt for them. But though they did not effect such a separation, yet they might indicate it; at least, they who were weak in the faith might be discouraged into such a conclusion. They might be led to infer that, as the ills and adversities of life were the portion of those who embrace the Saviour, there could be little love on His part towards those whom He had the power to rescue from these, but did not choose to put it forth. When they saw that it was for His sake they were so pursued even unto the death, their courage and their confidence might have given way, and they have stood in doubt of there being any regard on Heaven's part towards them. The terrors and trials of that distressing period might have prevailed against them; and they, trusting no longer to the affection of Christ for their persons or their interests, might have renounced their faith, and along with this their affection for the Saviour.

Now, St. Paul in the passage before us is bearing up his own mind, and that of his converts, against the despondency of this unbelief. He, as it were, is not suffering himself to think that all these dark and lowering adversities manifest either the decay or the dissolution of any love for them on the side of their merciful High Priest. He comes, in fact, to the very opposite conclusion: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." He looks back to the great fight of afflictions that they had formerly been involved in. He recalls the manifold escapes, or, what is more characteristic of victory, the occasions on which they had been armed with intrepidity for the contest, and were enabled to face all the hostilities and hardships of the Christian profession and to endure them. And he connects the inspiration of all that courage, by which they had been upholden so nobly, with Him from whom it descended. They were conquerors only through Him that loved them. It was He who nerved them for the conflict. It was He who gave them either wisdom to overcome in argument, or strength to suffer under the inflictions of personal violence. It was a moral warfare in which they were engaged, and in this He enabled them to conquer. It was a struggle between pain and principle; and He so succoured and sustained the latter, as that they could bid defiance to the fiercest assaults of the former —causing the spiritual to prevail over the animal nature; and between these two elements—the infused heroism of the new man and the creeping fearfulness of the old, enabling the grace to make head in this internal conflict against the corruption, and to carry it.

And here it is of great practical importance to remark, that the way in which God often manifests His protecting and fatherly care of us is, not by obtaining for us the safety of a flight, but, better and nobler than this, the triumph of a victory. In plainer words, He may neither withdraw the calamity from us, nor us from the calamity; but leaving it to bear with full weight upon our spirits, He pours a strength into our spirits which enables them to bear up under it. It is in this way frequently, that He makes good the promise of not suffering us to be tried beyond what we are able to bear. He does not lighten the suffering, but He adds to the strength; and, as it were, cradles us by the education of a severe spiritual discipline, into a state of spiritual maturity. After that the apostles had been threatened by the Jewish rulers to desist from preaching, they did not pray that no more threats might be uttered, or that the power of executing their menaces should be taken away. They did not pray for a deliverance from the outward trial, but for a supply of inward resolution, that they might be upheld against it. "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word." And so with Christians in all ages. They estimate the kindness of God towards them by His spiritual rather than by His temporal blessings. They count not that God has separated or withdrawn Himself, because His earthly comforts have abandoned them. The most distressing separation to them were to be abandoned by the aids of His grace. That they fell into suffering were to them no indication of His faded or expiring regards for them; but should they fall into sin, this were the sad and sorrowing evidence of an angry or of a withdrawing God. When He puts some dark adversity to flight, this may prove that He has made them to be safe. But higher far when He discharges this adversity upon them, and they come out, of erect and unhurt spirit, from the onset and the uproar of its violence—this proves that He maketh them to conquer, and to be more than conquerors.

The great object in fact with every true Christian is, not that the life of sense shall be regaled with pleasures or protected from annoyance; but above this and ulterior to this, that the life of grace shall flourish and advance under all the varieties whether of sensible pain or sensible enjoyment. In the prosecution of what may be termed this higher game, there is at least secured to him that which, according to Lord Bacon, forms one chief ingredient of human happiness—even heroic feelings or heroic desires. The man, you will observe, whose heart is thus set, has a loftier aim than those of an everyday character, and he may be said to expatiate in a loftier region. They are certain moral and spiritual points that he tries to win, and that in the face of certain hurts or hazards to which they are exposed—and in this higher walk of profit and loss, you will at once see how wholly dissimilar his engrossments are from those who travail in the ordinary pursuits and speculations of merchandise. It is most true that he may so travail and yet be a Christian; but there is all the distance in the world between him who diligently labours after riches as the ultimate landing-place on which his heart does terminate, and him who while not slothful in business yet fervent in spirit labours to keep that heart with all diligence. They look wholly different ways, and must be variously affected by the same events, according to what that is which mainly occupies them. Now, a man is never overset, never plunges into helpless and irrecoverable despair, but on the giving way of that which he holds to be his main interest; and hence you will perceive, that the same visitation of calamity which should make one man feel that he is undone, may give to another a sense of noblest independence—in that he has met the poverty or the pain with a spirit unhurt, if not bettered by the collision; and that, in the triumph of a faith which looks onward and ahead of all that is visible, he can rise superior to the disaster, and trample it beneath him.

Ver. 38, 39.—Before taking our conclusive leave of this subject, I should like to unfold, if I could, how it is that our love to God, and God's love to us, act and react the one upon the other. There is an ambiguity in the general expression, 'the love of God,' that causes it to be insignificant of either of these two affections; and we do think that, in order to arrive at the full spirit and meaning of the passage which is before us, reference must be made to both of them.

For, in the first place, our persuasion of God's love to us is of all other things the most fitted to keep alive within us our love to God. It is just in fact the spiritual process of faith working by love. We believe in the love that God has to us, and we love Him back again. It is His good-will to us acting upon our gratitude to Him—a good-will however which must be perceived and trusted in, ere the responding emotion is awakened in our hearts. Apart from the view of Christ, and apart from the conviction of God's good-will to us in Christ, we could not possibly love Him. The heart would be preoccupied with another affection, which would keep love from entering; for if it be true that love casts out fear, it is just as true that fear keepeth out love. Now while the view of God in Christ awakens love, the view of God out of Christ awakens terror. We then see Him as a lawgiver armed to destroy us—a God of sacredness whose hostility against sin is unappeased and unappeasable—a judge sitting in the high state of His affronted dignity, and roused by the jealousies of His holy nature to an act of vengeance on the creatures who had renounced His authority, and cast despite and defiance upon His throne. It is thus that the thought of God stirs up images of dread and disturbance in the bosom, amid which the love of God most assuredly cannot dwell; and it is not till this dark imagery gives place to another view and another aspect of the Divinity—it is not till the Mediator steps between, and we see that economy of wisdom of grace by which the law has been disarmed yet the Lawgiver has been pacified — it is not till we behold Him as God in Christ, through whom truth and mercy have met together, and good-will to men has been made most firmly and harmoniously to unite with glory to God in the highest—it is then, and not till then, that the great moral revolution is brought about in the sinner's heart, of a love for that Being whom he before stood afraid of; and of kindest regard for that awful but now amiable Deity, who, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, stands forth in all the graces of His manifested kindness towards a guilty world. Let this persuasion but find entrance into the bosom, and it will clear away the distrust and the alienation, and I will add the hatred, that had before the possession and the mastery therein. It is the expressed persuasion of the apostle in our text. He believed the love of God in Christ towards him; and retaining this belief in the midst of disasters and of trials which would have shaken the confidence of other men—just as he kept by the persuasion that these dark and lowering appearances did not indicate any separation of God's love from him, so neither did they effectuate any separation of his love from God.

It was the strength of his persuasion in God's love to him that so settled and secured his love to God. It was because his persuasion in the love of God did not give way that his love to God did not give way. It was a persuasion brought to the trial and that stood its ground against it—and just by the very force of that sentiment which made Job say, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' There was a storm that might well have made his confidence to falter. There were, in those days, a desertion and a dreariness in the profession of the gospel, by which God meant to discipline the spirit of its converts; but which by the eye of sense might well have been interpreted into the manifestation of His displeasure. And it was because faith prevailed over sense—it was because the persuasion of God's love to him availed the heart of Paul, like an anchor of hope, that kept him attached and steady amid the conflicts and fiercest agitation of this world's violence—it was because, like Abraham of old, he staggered not out of his belief, for all that seemed menacing in the persecutions and cruel sufferings of that tempestuous age—it was because, notwithstanding of these, he still held by the confidence that God's love was not separated from him—that neither was his love separated from God.

There was nothing, I have already said, in all these adversities, that could effect the separation of God's love from Paul and his disciples. The very most which they could do would be to indicate or to make them fancy such a separation — after which, and when driven from their trust, they would lose their hold of the very principle by which their love was alimented; and thus, although there was nought in this world's fortunes which could have any immediate effect in separating God's love from them, they might be of powerful effect in separating their love from God. It is not to be imagined, indeed, that the creature can have such influential operation on the mind of the Creator as to detach His affections from those to whom they had been given; but it may have influence enough upon their mind to detach their affections from Him—after which, no doubt, He ceases His regards from those who have thus cast Him off. Their prayers for aid in the hour of temptation lose all efficacy, because no longer raised with the faith of those who utter them. The love of God in Christ will never fail those who keep a firm and confiding hold of it. But they let go their hold, and so fall away; and thus, not because of the power which this world's fortunes have over the mind of God, but because of the power which they have over the minds of men, there may come to be between these two parties a complete and conclusive separation.

It is on these considerations that we deem it the best practical way of closing our lengthened elucidations upon this passage, shortly to urge upon you the tendency which there is in the world and in its fluctuations to separate you from God; and how, making head against this tendency, you should retain the love of Him in your hearts, and so retain His love towards you, under all the varieties whether prosperous or adverse of this present scene.

For you will observe, that, in Paul's enumeration of those influences which he stood determined to resist, but which certainly exposed to hazard the steadfastness of his love to God, there is room allowed, not alone for the assaults of adversity, but for the wiles and the blandishments of prosperity. He says that neither life nor death should separate him from the love of God—that neither things present nor things to come should do it—that no creature of any kind whatever should do it—all giving reason to believe that he had in his eye what was agreeable to the life of sense, and which might seduce our love from God, as well as what was painful or terrifying, and which might cause that love to perish in a storm of calamity. And what we now propose is, to attend a little to each of these distinct influences, that you may beware alike of both, and suffer neither the joys nor the griefs of your earthly pilgrimage to separate you from God.

First, then, as to the effect of that which regales and satisfies the life of sense, in withdrawing our hearts from their love to God. There is nothing in it, we admit, that should induce the suspicion of God's unkindness or hostility against us, or that should make us cease to be persuaded of God's love to us, and so to uphold the love of our gratitude to Him back again. We may continue to believe as before; and, in as far as faith worketh by love, it may be thought that there is every security we shall love as before. But in regard to the operation of faith upon the character, there is a most important principle laid down by the apostle in one of his epistles to the Corinthians. He there speaks of our believing in vain, unless we keep the truth so believed in our memory. The use of our faith in any truth is, that we may ever be recurring in thought and in remembrance to that truth, for the purpose of our ever and anon keeping its appropriate moral influence close upon the heart. Without this, it would appear, that the faith is of no use to us. There are a thousand things which we at one time believed, and which we would believe again were they called up to the remembrance, but which now lie as forgotten things in the mind's dormitory. Our faith in them is of no further use. There are many events through the years that have gone by, of private and personal history, which we believed at the time on the testimony of others—many of which we have read, and read with conviction, in books of public and political information—many propositions of science so demonstrated as to carry our firm assent to their truth, and all of which have now faded and escaped from the memory for ever. We once believed in them, and, were they recalled into the mind's presence, we should believe in them again; but ceasing to be thought of, all their practical influence has ceased also. And the very same holds, and is indeed expressly affirmed by the apostle, of the truths of Christianity. It is of no use that on some one day they have been acquiesced in, if day after day they are not adverted to. Even the death of Christ, it would appear, loses its efficacy for salvation if it be not kept in remembrance. And even though we should have once believed the love which God has to us—this, if not dwelt upon in thought and cherished as our habitual recollection, is of no effect to perpetuate or keep alive our love to Him back again.

You will hence understand the hazard to which this affection is exposed from prosperity. It does not make us cease to believe that God has a yet unseparated love to us; but it makes us cease to think of it. We are satisfied with things present, and we look no farther. Or we dwell on the bright and golden hopes of the things that are to come, and the mind so occupied ceases to have God in its habitual contemplation. It is thus that both things present and things to come—neither of which the apostle was determined should separate his love from God—do, in point of fact, separate and withdraw the affections of many from Him, who is the fountain of all that they have and all that they hope for. The mind is otherwise engaged than with the thought of Him—the heart is otherwise engaged than with the love of Him. It is taken up with sensible things, and forgets the unseen God on whom they are all suspended. The apostle, by way of contrasting two habits of the soul which are opposite and incompatible, says of one set of men that their conversation is in heaven, and that thence they look for the Saviour; and of another set of men, that they mind earthly things. Now the effect of our prosperity is to engross the mind with earthly things, and to withdraw its conversation and its lookings from heaven, and from all the benevolence which is there. We cease to love the

God whom we have forgotten. He is out of mind, and so out of heart. He is dispossessed as an object of thought, and so is dispossessed as an object of affection. What is not present to our view is not of power to stir up our emotions, and not because prosperity has shaken us out of any belief that we ever had in God's love to us, but because it hath stolen us away from the thought of it, therefore our love to Him waxeth cold.

This effect of prosperity in making us forget God and His love, by fastening our regards upon other objects, is palpably evinced by the state and tendencies of almost every heart throughout the winged hours of a free and festive holiday—when we give ourselves wholly up to the fascination of things present; and, amid the glee and bustle and vivacity of our successive enjoyments, not the futurities alone of an eternal world, but even all the futurities of our earthly pilgrimage are forgotten. We merely ask you to compute how much or how little of God there is in the bosom that is thus animated—whether it is not really true that the exhilarations of such a day banish all thought of Him; and though the lake or the landscape on which you make delighted excursion be of His workmanship, and the happy faces by which you are surrounded be lighted up by a life and a spirit that He has breathed into every moving creature; and all the luxuries by which your various senses are regaled to the uttermost have been scattered from the hand of Him, who hath opened it wide, and poured them liberally forth on the face of a world which He hath most bountifully stocked and most beauteously adorned—yet we ask you, on your own recollection of the joyous party and all that gladdened them in the shape of nature's brilliancy without, or the music and the dance and the plenteous hospitality and the costly decorations and the ring of merry companionship within—we would just ask, if, amid the turmoil of all these bright and busy images which are then made to occupy the heart, there has been room during one short minute of the whole protracted gratification for the thought of God as your reconciled Father, of God as the friend to whom all the glory and the gratitude should arise? Now the life of a prosperous man is one lengthened holiday. His business is the game, and the successful game at which he plays. His rapidly succeeding centages are the stakes that have been won by him, and which lead him onward to bolder adventures than before. His bills and his bargains and his lawsuits are the moves and the checks wherewith he carries the enterprise to a fortunate termination. In launching a speculation there are felt by him the sport and the high-blown spirit of the race; and, in its run and prosperous return laden with spoils and with profits, there is felt by him all the exultation of victory. Between the gains of the counting house and the hours of evening enjoyment with his family—between the calls of his urgent business and the delights of his summer recreation—between the season at which he hardly and heartily labours and the season at which he relaxes amid the beauties of his magnificent retreat and the blandishments of expensive luxury—we see nought in the life of a thriving citizen, but that still its reigning character is that of a busy and protracted holiday—a life taken up to the full with the interest and the urgency of present things—where that which is seen dispossesses the heart of all regard to that which is unseen—where, in the hurry and the splendour and the successive evolutions of one thing to delight and occupy the heart after another, the thoughts of God and of His love are kept at a wide and habitual distance from the bosom; and without once caring whether the love of God be separated from you, you have abandoned your feelings to the force and ascendency of things present, and so separated yourselves from all love to God.

And in such a life there are not only things present, but things to come, that withdraw our hearts from the love of God. Man lives in futurity. The desire which stretches forth to a distant good has far greater mastery over the heart than the delight wherewith it regales itself in the good which is actually realized. The charm of a coming prosperity has more power to fascinate and detain the heart from every other object than even all the joys of our existing prosperity. The mind is still more engrossed with the prospects of a speculation that is yet afloat, than with the actual proceeds of a speculation that is now terminated. And it is this, I imagine, which must constitute the main hazard to your souls, of that walk on which many who now hear me are to be found—hasting perhaps with too much eagerness after the wealth that perisheth—giving, it may be, every affection and energy within you, to some fancied sufficiency that you have not yet attained, and the possession of which you hold to be enough for happiness—fastening all your thoughts and regards on this object which is placed below, and so of necessary consequence shifting them away from every object that is above—occupying the mind with that which is earthly, and in that very proportion withdrawing the mind from that which is heavenly.

We do not suppose that you have admitted a wrong belief all the while into your understanding. If you once gave credit to God's testimony of His love to you in Christ Jesus, the likelihood is that on the question being put, you will profess the same credit still. You are not sensible of any such revolution in your opinions on this subject as should either change or in any way impair the orthodoxy of your creed. The thing is credited as before, but it is not attended to as before. When the mind does come into contact with the doctrine, it just entertains it as it wont, and judges of it as it wont; but then it is not so habitually in contact with it as it wont. We do not complain that now you think of it erroneously, but we complain that now you seldom or never think of it at all. The love to you of God in Christ is seldom present to the eye of the mind, because the eye is elsewhere directed; and so it is that your love in return waxes cold. When the good-will ceases to be seen—the gratitude ceases to be felt. The object is not kept in the memory, and so the affection which that object is fitted to awaken is not kept in the heart. When the one disappears, the other dies away; and it is this which explains the decline and at length the utter extinction of Christianity with many, whose notions were all evangelical, and even continue to be so—but whose zeal, fervent and declared as it may at one time have been, is now scarcely ever felt, just because the things which awaken zeal are now scarcely ever thought of. The man does not understand the thing differently from before, but he does not look to it so frequently as before. He is otherwise taken up. The engagements of business have gotten the entire hold of him. The multitude of his prospects and affairs and brooding speculations wields an entire and absolute mastery over his spirit. He lives under the power of things that are to come, but they are not the things of faith and eternity. They are altogether the things of a perishable world—the coming profits of some goodly adventure—the coming result of some keen and busy negotiation—the coming market, whose sales might elevate his fortune to that of the most affluent and honourable among the citizens. In the turmoil of such engrossments as these, the man has never changed his creed—he has had no time for it. He is every way as sound and evangelical as ever; and if one time the professor of a strict and serious orthodoxy, he may still have a name to live, while in spirit and in reality he is altogether dead. And thus we have not to go back to the apostles' days, that we may witness the power either of present or future things to separate the heart from the love of God. We see the vivid exemplification of it around us, and as much we fear on the walks of peaceful and prosperous merchandise as in any bygone age of persecuting violence—as much in the seduction of this world's good, as in the terrors of this world's dark and menacing adversity.

But we mistake the matter, if we think that sensible things derive their power to alienate the heart from God, only from the deceit and the blandishment which lie in prosperity. It should never be forgotten, that there is no other way in which we can be made to love God than by our looking to His love for us—no other way by which we can keep ourselves loving Him habitually than by our looking at Him habitually. Whatever then withdraws the eye of our mind from Him, will withdraw the regards of our heart from Him; and we just ask you to think, whether the things that distress or terrify the spirit, have not to the full as great a mastery over the attention as the things that satisfy and regale it. Have not grief for some actual adversity, and fearful anxiety for a coming one, have not these as great a power of engrossment as either the present delight or the bright and joyful anticipations of prosperity? They affect the mind differently, it is true; but each may in its turn take up the mind wholly and exclusively, and so be alike mischievous in keeping the thoughts at a distance from God. And it argues an enlightened discernment by Scripture of the human spirit and all its mysteries, that, while it pronounces of this world's riches how they beset the entrance of the kingdom of heaven, it also affirms that there is a sorrow of this world which worketh death; and you do well to notice that in the parable of the sower, where the heart of an engrossed and overcrowded man is compared to the ground that is overrun with thorns, and on which the vegetation of the good seed is stifled and destroyed—you do well to notice that they are not merely the riches and the pleasures, but also the cares of this life, which choke and hinder from ever coming to maturity the good seed of the word of God.

Such then being the effect of crosses and adversities on your spiritual condition—is it the safe plan for you as Christians to lengthen out or to contract the line of your exposure to them? Ought you not to pause ere you comply with the invitations of some new enterprise, that shall bring along with it a train of hazards and anxieties and fearful misgivings, ere the termination be arrived at; and perhaps after all a termination of defeat and disaster that may utterly overwhelm you? We know little of the details of your merchandise; but we know enough to affirm, in the general, that, if your means be limited, the field of your operations ought proportionally to be moderate and manageable; that what is true in the business of other things is also true in the business of trade, you ought not to meddle with matters too high for you; that every risk which you cannot meet with your own property, and every daring adventure by which that of others is brought to hazard, should be avoided as unlawful. This much we know; and that nevertheless there is an insidious temptation that is perpetually operating, and by which the ambitious and the unwary are led into a higher game than they are adequate to all the chances of—that oft there is a floating vision which dances before their eyes in the shape of some goodly or gainful speculation, and by which they suffer themselves to be lured into a sea of troubles—that thus their cares and their concerns are greatly multiplied; and the ground on which they stand, now become more precarious than before, is felt as if it tottered under them; and in expedients for putting off the evil day, and shifts for temporary credit, and devices and disguises innumerable, they flounder from one difficulty to another, with a heart wholly oppressed and overcharged. Even had fortune smiled on their aërial voyage, there would, as we have already endeavoured to show, have been, in the prosperity that crowned it, an influence to war against their souls. But in the calamity which crosses it, there may lie a tenfold hostility; and when we look to the sadly beset and bewildered man, as he writhes in secret under the necessities that encompass, or ruminates on the sad explosion of disgrace that is before him; when we think of the way in which his heart is occupied, and that positively there is not room in it for any thoughts of God; when we consider thought as the aliment of affection, and that we can only love our Maker in as far as we have time and space for the leisurely and undisturbed contemplation of His love to us; when we compute the manifold distractions of such a misguided individual, and the constant weight or agitation that lie upon his spirits—then we can no longer wonder that, in reference to the things of faith and of an eternal world, his soul should have been utterly dispossessed as if by the violence of fierce invaders—that other thoughts and other feelings should wholly monopolize him; and that, with an outset perhaps of seemly professorship, he should at length, because pierced through with many sorrows, have separated between himself and all sacredness, and become an alien and an apostate from his God.

There is danger to your soul from the abundance of this world's cares, as well as from the abundance of this world's comforts; and therefore it is that you should avoid all wanton or unnecessary exposure to the former, even as you ought to be vigilant and sedate and sober-minded amid the blandishments of the latter. That there is a power in earthly sadness, as well as in earthly joy, to dispossess the heart of its love for God, may be exemplified by what we sometimes see in a case of forlorn widowhood. It has occurred that the sufferer under such a bereavement has been irrecoverably wo-struck, and so abandoned herself to helpless and hopeless melancholy—wholly unable to lift her spirits up from their dejection, and, with a determination somewhat like impracticable sullenness, utterly refusing to be comforted. That under a grief so immeasurable and absorbing there are very many things which now cease to interest her, is not marvellous; but what most indicates the dispossessing power of this affection is, that now she should cease to love her own children—that even to those whom nature had so powerfully endeared to her, her heart has become cold and alienated; and immovably fixed as it is on the departed object of her tenderness, all its affinities with present objects have been broken. This is rare, we admit; but it proves what force of separation there is in grief, if, even once or at any time, the strong parental attachment has been thereby dissevered: and much more does it prove how possible it is, that an affection at all times so slender as that of love to the unseen Deity, should give way under the power of a similar visitation; how in grief for the loss of fortune there might be a force at least equivalent to that of separating us from the love of God; how that which though rarely is the cause of a literal suicide inflicted upon the person, may frequently be the cause of a moral and spiritual suicide inflicted upon the soul; and so by hasting to be rich, have many fallen into temptation and a snare, and erred from the faith; and, just because they pierced themselves through with many sorrows, have they also drowned themselves in destruction and perdition.

If then there be danger to the soul, both from success in business and from its crosses and misfortunes, what, it may be asked, should they do who are immersed in the prosecution of it? Not withdraw from their callings, certainly; but so regulate and restrain and rectify, as that their callings shall not withdraw them from the love of God. There must be a way of being not slothful in business, and yet of being fervent in spirit, and, lest we should be charged with having dealt in this important question with generalities alone, let me conclude with one plain and practical direction to you. The thing which separates your love from Christ is, that with so much of the earthly to think of, you think but little and perhaps never of His love to you. What I hold to be indispensable for the preservation within you of spiritual life, is that you clear out for yourselves a season, and that too a frequently recurring season, of contemplation and prayer. In the constant appliance of sensible objects and sensible interests to your heart, all the grace that is in it must wither and decay; and, unless you take up the sentiment of the apostle, and desire with him, that neither things present nor things to come, neither the pride and prosperity of life, nor the death of all our worldly hopes, nor any creature whatever, shall have power to separate you from the love of Christ—your religion may perish amid the many urgencies by which you are surrounded. What I hold to be your peculiar necessity is, that you so arrange as frequently to escape from these urgencies. It were well that you had many a breathing-time, and for this purpose it is not enough that your Sabbaths be hallowed to the exercises and the studies of sacredness—you should have many a hallowed moment through the week—you should have a morning and an evening sacrifice—you should train your spirit to the work of oft retiring within itself, and oft raising up its faculties that it may lay hold of God. Even in the heat and bustle of the day there might be room for the occasional aspiration; and though nought more disparaging to Christianity than to fancy it a religion of days and forms and stated punctualities, yet, beset and occupied as many of you are, I hold that the highest principle, as well as the highest prudence, is involved in your set and regular observations of sacredness. The soul might else move adrift among the countless influences that are ever and anon bearing upon it; and such is the actual opposition between all the things which are in the world and the love of the Father, that the drift is away from God. To recover those thoughts of God and Christ which the world would dissipate—along with the stray thoughts to recall the stray affections, and so maintain and constantly renew a fellowship of heart with the Father and the Son — to light again and again the flame of sacredness within, and so to keep it from expiring utterly—to lift yourselves from the deadness and degradation of the things that are beneath—I am aware of no better expedient than that you have your times of communing, through the Bible and prayer, with the things that be above, and that you determinedly adhere to them. Let not the urgencies of business separate you from those precious minutes which you should give to the remembrance of God's love to you in Christ Jesus; and then the fortunes of business, whether prosperous or adverse, shall not be able to separate your hearts from that return of love which you owe to God in Christ Jesus. Pray unceasingly for His grace to overcome the world, and you shall be more than conquerors through Him than loved you.

It is high time to break away from this world's entanglements — to dispossess your heart of things present, and turn them to the things that are to come; and that not to the coming things of your earthly pilgrimage, but, overleaping these and the death which is beyond them, to look onward to the awful realities which lie upon the other side. If you have not yet made the movement from the habit of walking by sight to that of walking by faith, it is a movement which must be made ere you die—else the life eternal, which is only to those with whom all old things have been done away and all things have become new, you shall never, never realize. And it concerns you all to understand, that by every day of postponement you are getting more helplessly implicated in the slavery of sense and of sin than before—that if you seek not first the kingdom of God, every other thing which you seek and set your affections upon just widens your distance from Him the more—that the love of all which is in the world separates and alienates the heart the more irrecoverably from Him who made the world—that thus in every footstep you make, there is a farther departure from the Being whose favour is life, but whose frown is endless and irremediable destruction: And more particularly, may every fresh speculation in which you engage, and that constant trooping of successive cares and hopes and interests from one mercantile engrossment to another, so multiply the ties by which you are rooted and fastened down to a perishable scene—that when at length overtaken and torn forcibly away from it by the last messenger, you shall be found to be wholly of the earth and altogether earthly—overrun with carnality, and having a full part in the saying that the carnal mind is death. I ask you not to be hermits and to abandon either the world or its business, but I ask you to be aware of the evil of it. I ask your instantaneous and habitual recurrence to the objects of faith, that the objects of sight may no longer have the ascendant over you. I ask you so to retire and separate yourselves from the love of things present, that you may not be separated from the love of God—not to give up the use of the world, but so to use it as not to abuse it—not to cast away from you the good things of this life, but by your habitual regard to the better things of another life, to strip them of their power, so as that they shall not be able to separate you from the high interests of an accountable and imperishable creature.

LECTURE LXVIII.

ROMANS IX. 1-3.

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

The matter of which Paul here makes such strong asseveration, is not one that could be looked upon by the eyes of those whom he addresses; but one that himself only could take direct and immediate cognisance of. It had not its residence without, so that others should have access to it by any faculty of external observation; but had its residence within—within the repository of the apostle's own bosom, and he only had access to it by the faculty of conscience. He could not therefore say of it—this is true, for come and see that it is so—he could not thus make his appeal to the senses of other men, for no other earthly eye was upon it than that of his own mind. He therefore had recourse to the only expedient which those in general have, who feel that a certain suspicion attaches to their testimony, and who have no additional testimony wherewith to confirm it—even that of strenuous and repeated affirmation—' I say the truth, I lie not.'

But Paul, in this necessary defect of human witnesses, does make mention of other witnesses; and which he seems at least to appeal to. He does not simply assert that he says the truth, but that he says it 'in Christ;' neither does he simply quote the testimony of his conscience, but his conscience as bearing him witness 'in the Holy Ghost'—most competent witnesses assuredly to the matter here spoken of, seeing that both had thorough insight into the recesses of the human spirit—Christ knowing what is in man—the Holy Ghost searching all things, and how much more the things of man, when He searcheth even into the deep things of God!

In our readings of the Bible we often acquit ourselves of the task very currently; and are apt to speed our way over whole phrases, without being at all arrested by any thought or feeling of their significance—and that, too, with a book where there is nothing insignificant. The introduction of Christ and of the Holy Ghost in this verse has perhaps with most of us never stirred up any inquiry into the mind and meaning of the apostle, when he thus refers to them. We recognise their names as well known sounds that are quite familiar to the ear; and the understanding, therefore, not startled, as it were, into vigilance by any strange or rarely uttered vocable, remains asleep and insensible to the thought which lies couched in the phraseology of the apostle. It is thus, we apprehend, that it fares in very many instances with the Bible—that this mine of precious things is passed over without being entered into—that, full though it is of truth and of meaning throughout all its clauses, there is little drawn out of it by the daily perusals of the mere formalist in Christianity, who, satisfied with running his eye over the pages of Scripture, obtains no view whatever of the richness that is underneath; or who, content that with his mouth he should pronounce the language of inspiration, although with his mind he never touches or comes close to the realities which that language embodies, is truly one of those to whom the kingdom of God cometh in word only and not at all in power.

It was for the sake of Christ that Paul made departure from the great body of his countrymen. It was to win Christ that he counted all the honours which his zeal and his talent might have earned for him among the Jews, and all the pleasure which he had enjoyed in their society—that he counted them but loss in his estimation. They looked on his association with Christ as the act by which he had broken friendship with them. He had at least, however, given by it full evidence of his sincerity. He had relinquished all hopes of earthly preferment, and had braved all the terrors of persecution. In speaking of his truth in Christ, he spake of that by which his truth was most nobly accredited. His being in Christ was that which gave the fullest possible demonstration of his own uprightness; and, in the face of the Jewish apprehension that because the friend of Christ he was an enemy of theirs, he in that very name affirms his desire for their eternal welfare to be the most urgent feeling of a bosom, which still felt all its wonted affinities to his countrymen, and glowed with all its wonted affection towards them. And besides, the joining of that name to an affirmation was tantamount to the confirming of it by an oath. It was a name which, they might well have known, he never could have associated with the utterance of a falsehood;

and so, to overcome the impression which obtained among the people of his own nation, as if he had lost all his ancient and natural regard for them, he appeals to that very Jesus for whose sake he had abandoned the faith of his countrymen, in support of his solemn averment that he had not abandoned any part of that friendship which he ever entertained for them.

There must be also a meaning which he intended to convey when he spake of his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. It is competent for any man's conscience to take notice of any urgent or strongly felt affection that may be at work in his bosom—as, for example, of the great heaviness and continual sorrow that was in his heart. It needs not the special intervention of any divine or special supernatural agent to inform a human creature, whether it be joy or sadness or anger or fear that is the occupant of his heart for the time being; and we should therefore like to find what the precise addition was, or what the peculiarity which distinguished it from a mere ordinary intimation of conscience, when Paul's conscience bore him witness in the Holy Ghost.

Apart from the force which the very mention of Christ and of the Holy Ghost gives to this asseveration of the apostle, as if calling upon them to be witnesses of its truth, and so giving to his utterance all the sanction and solemnity of an oath—apart from this, there is conveyed to us by the phrase in question, that the Holy Ghost was in Paul at the time of this affirmation—that it had to do with his conscience while it testified of that which was in the heart of the apostle, and had to do with his heart by putting and upholding in it that affection of which his conscience bare witness. The fruit of the Spirit, it is said, is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. It is by the last of these fruits, by the truth which it puts into the inward parts, that it both enlightens and directs the conscience. It acts by enabling the conscience to look more clearly on its own proper field of observation—by shedding a greater brightness and legibility on the lineaments of that inward tablet whereon are graven all the characteristics of a man's soul—whether that soul be now an epistle of Christ, so that in reading it we examine ourselves and ascertain that we are indeed in the faith—or it still bears the unaltered inscription of original and unrenewed nature, so that in reading it we become convinced of sin. It is thus, by revealing to the eye of conscience the real condition of the inward parts, that the Spirit performs the office either of aid-ing in the work of self-examination, or of convincing a man of sin ere he becomes a Christian. And He not only makes truth known to the conscience, but He makes the man who professes to utter the intimations of this conscience to be strictly observant of the truth—so that the man whose conscience bears him witness in the Holy Ghost, is both a man who is not himself deceived in regard to the real nature of his own internal feelings, neither would deceive others when he reports what these feelings are.

But further, the Holy Ghost not only enabled him clearly to apprehend the affection by which he was actuated, not only guided him to make true and faithful declaration thereof, but gave him the affection itself; and, in virtue of His fruit being goodness as well as truth, put into him that good and gracious distress which so overweighed his spirit when he bethought him of the spiritual condition of his own countrymen. What would have been a natural affection in others, was in the heart of Paul made by the Holy Ghost a sanctified affection. There was something most natural, and I could almost add justifiable, even in the pride of Jewish patriotism—for never was a nation so distinguished; and never had a people, even among those whom history has most gorgeously blazoned in all the honours of ancestry and of great achievement, such marvellous distinctions to boast of. All the trophies of conquest and of literature and of all earthly renown, make not out a crown of traditional glory for any of the states or monarchies of other days which is at all like unto that crown of transcendental glory, that halo from heaven, which sits on the character and the fortunes of the children of Israel. There is nought in the sages, and in the warriors, and in all that is recorded either of the prowess or the philosophy of any other land, which serves so to irradiate its name, as the name and the land of the Hebrews are irradiated by their patriarchs and their prophets and their holy men of God. The traveller, whose imagination has been sublimed among the historic remembrances which he saw around him in the classical territory of Greece and Rome, has confessed a deeper visitation of awe and of lofty emotion as he walked over the priestly and consecrated land of Judea. Even the very humblest of that outcast race kindles in the recollection of his own ancestral dignity, and feels a sort of conscious superiority to other men, when he thinks of himself as one of that selected nation whom seers did instruct, and whom angels visited; and that they were forefathers of his who heard from Sinai's flaming top the words of the Eternal. Paul seems to have felt some such patriotic inspiration as he made mention of the Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the law and the service of God and the promises—whose, he says, are the fathers; and of whom, so far from having lost all sense of their nobleness by having become a Christian, he sums up this heraldry of his nation by what he deemed the brightest of all its ensigns—even that of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

It may serve to guard you against a delusion, should you, on this subject, make the proper distinction between that which was natural and that which was spiritual in this patriotic affection of the apostle. The former might be deponed to by an ordinary intimation of the conscience—the latter is wholly the work of the Holy Ghost, and can only be manifested to the man who has it by the conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. It will perhaps make the distinction between these two things all the more palpable, if we only ask what this high and heavenly ingredient has at all to do with those compositions of our recent poetry known under the title of 'Hebrew Melodies.' It has truly nothing to do either with the genius and enthusiasm of those who framed them, or with the delighted admiration of those who listen to and perform them. The poetry, the pathos, the music, the beauteous and touching imagery, the recollections of domestic tenderness, the resolves and the vows of lofty patriotism—these are natural feelings, and must all be put down to the account of nature. But it follows not, ye sons and daughters of song, alive though ye be to the fascination of these touching numbers, that, because you kindle at the inspiration of genius, you have any part in the inspiration of Heaven. It is not for us to pronounce on the Christianity of the men who emanated these magical effusions; but we affirm it to be possible of the very man whose hand has so embellished these sacred themes, that in his heart there might not have been a particle of sacredness. And so with you, who melt in all the luxury of emotion over these strains of ancient psalmody; and which only now, when set to the cadence of modern versification and the music of our modern drawing-rooms, have become strains of enchantment.

Ver. 2.—'That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.'

But to return from this digression. In the heart of Paul, we have no doubt that both the natural and the spiritual were blended; and, in the estimation of unconverted men, the former might of itself account for the great sorrow and continual heaviness that was in his heart. He felt for the overthrow of such a nation. He had sympathy for its fallen greatness. It would seem, from the enumeration that he has made of its glories, as if its proud and prosperous days had passed in recollection before him; and he could not but mourn over the prostrate condition that awaited it, when it should be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and become the outcast and the mockery of all people. He would have sorrowed, and that most profoundly, although he had felt no more than other Hebrews feel, because of their dispersed nation, their ruined temple, their profaned and desolated sanctuary. The sadness of nature would have been enough to overwhelm him in such a contemplation; but the heart of our apostle was weighed down by a still more oppressive sadness. He was not insensible to the sorrows of wounded patriotism, but his were the deeper and more distressful sorrows of reflecting piety. He sorrowed for his countrymen after a godly sort. He had his eye upon their rejected souls, their now hopeless salvation, their undone eternity. And of far more bitter endurance to him than even the slaughtered hosts and the captive families of Israel, was the miscarriage of his heart's fondest desire for them—that they might be saved.

Ver. 3.—'For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.'

Whatever be the precise import of those terms in which the apostle here expresses his affection for the Israelites, there is one thing in which there can be no mystery or mistake—and that is, the strength and exceeding urgency of the affection itself. The circumstance of their being his kinsmen according to the flesh gave him a special interest in their welfare; and the interest which he thus felt was mainly directed to the welfare of their immortality. On whatever other question criticism may stumble and go astray, there can be no misunderstanding of this. The literal sense of the verse may in one thing be somewhat unintelligible; but its moral and spiritual expression is altogether obvious. We have here the longing earnestness of an apostle after the salvation of his countrymen; and those sympathies of kindred, which in the hearts of ordinary men lead but to earthly gifts and earthly services, we see them in the instance before us taking a heavenward direction, and prompting the efforts and the expostulations and the prayers of this great Christian minister—not for the temporal but the everlasting welfare of those to whom he stood related by the affinities of blood. We cannot doubt the strength of these affinities even in the hearts of the veriest children of this world, and that innumerable are the kindnesses and charities of domestic life to which they give rise. We cannot refuse even to unsanctified nature those warm and benevolent affections which have their living play in the bosom of almost every family, and by whose workings it is that the society of earth is upheld. The lesson of the text is not that we should love our relatives, for this is what untaught and instinctive humanity can do; but to love the souls of our relatives,—this comes of something higher than the motives or the tendencies of spontaneous nature. Any man's conscience may bear him witness that he has a parent's instinctive fondness for his own children; but ere he can vouch with truth for a regard at all so strong or so lively to their imperishable souls, there must be a higher agent than nature at work with him. Ere he can say it with truth, he must say the truth in Christ—ere his conscience bear witness to it, it must bear him witness in the Holy Ghost.

But let us dwell at greater length on this phenomenon of character and feeling—for it is in truth an exhibition of humanity most pregnant with inference, and fitted more especially to prove how wide an interval there is between the things of sense and the things of sacredness. The agony of an infant's dying bed is not more real than the agony inflicted by it on a mother's bosom. The sufferings endured by the one have not a more stable or undoubted certainty than the sympathy which is felt for them by the other. They alike belong to man's sentient nature—in virtue of which there is scarcely a parent to be found who bears not in his heart a thorough devotion to all the earthly interests of those who have sprung from him; and shares not in all the distresses to which, by pain in their bodies or disappointment in their fame or in their fortunes, they as earthly creatures are exposed. In other words, all that belongs to our sensitive economy, which is taken down at death, is most feelingly sympathized with; and what we affirm is, that with all that belongs to our spiritual economy, which survives death, there may be no concern and no sympathy whatever. After all, then, this tenderness for relatives may at the very best be but a mere animal sensibility—an instinct which has just as little of fellowship with the things of faith and of eternity as has the similar instinct of any inferior creature. And it is indeed most striking to observe, under how many a parental roof all the amenities of nature's charity and of nature's care are absorbed and have their full termination in earthliness; how, while the bodily wants of every little nursling are most tenderly provided for, it is forgotten all the while that their spirits are imperishable; how, amid all the sighs and all the tenderness of family affection, scarce one effort is ever made to secure and scarce one alarm is ever felt lest they should fall short of a blissful eternity,—so that while we, alive at every pore to all that is present or visible in the condition of our children, do watch over their sick-beds, and weep over their tombs, we rarely ever think of those fearful possibilities which, on the other side of death, may still be in reserve for them; and seldom does the dread alternative of their future hell or their future heaven cost us one moment's agitation.

That such is experimentally the fact, we have, I am persuaded, the responding testimony of many a conscience among yourselves; and melancholy as the contemplation is, we should like to prolong it through one or two lectures more, for the sake of those practical uses to which it is subservient.

LECTURE LXIX.

ROMANS IX. 3.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

And first, it may be employed to rectify that meagre theology which is so far satisfied with man as he is, that it would hold a few slight and superficial amendments to be enough of themselves for changing him into man as he ought to be. This is one use to which we should turn what we have just observed of the parental affection. The earthliness of its whole drift proves man to be a creature altogether earthly; and the very strength of the affection serves to aggravate this lesson the more, and to betray all the more palpably our state of spiritual destitution. That the same parent who is so intent on the preferment of his children in the world, should be so utterly listless of their prospects, nor put forth one endeavour to obtain for them preferment in heaven—that he who would mourn over it as the sorest of his family trials, should one of them be bereft of any of the corporeal senses, and yet should take it so easily although none of them have a right sense of God or a right principle of godliness—that he who would be so sorely astounded did any of his little ones perish in a storm or a conflagration, should be so unmoved by all the fearful things that are reported of the region on the other side of death, where the fury of an incensed Lawgiver is poured upon all who have fled not to Christ as their refuge from the tempest, and they are made to lie down in the devouring fire and to dwell with everlasting burnings—that to avert from the objects of our tenderness the calamities, or to obtain for them the good things of this present life, there should be so much of care and of busy expedient, while not one practical measure is taken either to avert from them that calamity which is the most dreadful, or to secure for them that felicity which is the most glorious,—Why, there is indeed such obvious demonstration in all this of time being regarded as our all, and eternity being counted by us as nothing—so light an esteem in it of that God, an inheritance in whom we treat as of far less value for those who are dear to us than that they should be made richly to inherit the gifts of His providence—such a preference for ourselves, and for the fleeting generations that come after us—of the short-lived creature to the Creator who endureth for ever—as most strikingly to mark, even by the very loves and amiable sensibilities of our hearts, how profoundly immersed we are in the grossest carnality—that after all it is but an earthly horizon that bounds us, and an earthly platform we grovel on—that Nature, even in her best and most graceful exhibitions, gives manifest token of her fall, proving herself an exile from Paradise even in the kindest and honestest of the sympathies which belong to her—that, retaining though she does many soft and tender affinities for those of her own kind, she has been cast down and degraded beneath the high aims and desires of immortality—accursed even in her moods of greatest generosity, and evil in the very act of giving good gifts unto her children.

But another lesson than that of rectifying the meagre theology of the general public is that of rebuking those peculiar few who disown this theology, and hold themselves to be sound in the faith. We greatly fear that, in many instances, this soundness in the faith is little more than a holding of the form of sound words. The expression of the truth is acquiesced in, but the truth itself is not realized. A mere holding of the dogmata of a creed is not faith. It is not the substance of things hoped for, neither is it the evidence of things not seen. The man who looks onward to some station of emolument for his son—who provides him with the best education to qualify him for its duties—who himself superintends the preparation and strenuously plies him with the fit exercises for his training and future habits—who bestirs himself in the work of securing friends and soliciting patronage;—this man may be laudably employed, but he is walking by sight. To look onward for your children to a place in heaven—to enter them accordingly into a process of spiritual education—to watch and examine and labour, until the spiritual principles be established and the spiritual character be formed in them—to besiege in prayer the upper sanctuary, that you may obtain the patronage of the great Intercessor who is there, in behalf of your family, and through Him the grace and liberality of the King upon the throne—let me practically see this, and I would say of it that it was walking by faith. It is not the mere verbiage of an orthodox phraseology that constitutes you a believer. You believe substantially only if you *do*. It is not by the professing of these things that you show faith: it is by proceeding on the reality of these things. The man, upon whose work and upon whose walk the futurities of the unseen world have the same deciding power as the futurities of the seen and the sensible world that is before him—he it is who has the substance and not the shadow, the faith unfeigned. It will show itself in the regulation of the family as much as in any other of his personal affairs. The man whose heart is set on the conversion of his children—the man whose house is their school of discipline for eternity—he it is, and we fear he only of all other parents, who lives by faith. If you love your children, and at the same time are listless about their eternity, what other explanation can be given than that you believe not what the Bible tells of eternity? You believe not of the wrath and the anguish and the tribulation that are there. Those piercing cries that here from any one of your children would go to your very heart, and drive you frantic with the horror of its sufferings, you do not believe that there is pain there to call forth. You do not think of the meeting-place that you are to have with them before the judgment-seat of Christ, and of the looks of anguish and the words of reproach that they will cast upon you for having neglected and so undone their eternity. The awful sentence of condemnation—the signal of everlasting departure to all who know not God and obey not the gospel—the ceaseless moanings that ever and anon shall ascend from the lake of living agony—the grim and dreary imprisonment whose barriers are closed insuperably and for ever on the hopeless outcasts of vengeance,—these, ye men who wear the form of godliness but show not the power of it in the training of your families—these are not the articles of your faith. To you they are as the imaginations of a legendary fable. Else why this apathy? Why so alert to the rescue of your young from even the most trifling of calamities, and this dead indifference about their exposure to the most tremendous of all? Oh, the secret will be out. The cause bewrayeth itself. You have not faith; and, compassed about though you be with Sabbath forms and seemly observances and the semblances of a goodly and well looking profession, yet, if you labour not specifically and in practical earnest for the souls of your children, your doings short of this are we fear but the diseased and lame offerings of hypocrisy—your Christianity we fear is a delusion.

Let me therefore, in the third place, charge it upon parents, that they make proof of their own Christianity by looking well to the Christianity of their children. They profess the rewards and the glories of Paradise to be the noblest objects which an immortal being can aspire after. To these objects then, let them guide the ambition of those young immortals who are under their own roof; and, instead of regarding them as the inmates of a habitation that is to last for ever, let them be treated as passengers in the same vessel with themselves—as fellow-voyagers to an eternal home. In the work of their common preparation for such a home, let them never cease to ply the household with their precepts, or to ply Heaven with their prayers. Paul travailing in birth that Christ may be formed in his converts is fit to image forth the effort, the assiduity, the intense moral earnestness, wherewith parents should long and should labour for the conversion of their children. Be assured that this is an object for which one and all may be instant in season and out of season; and that no application, however pointedly directed and however urgently borne home on the consciences of any of your offspring, if under the guidance of that wisdom which winneth souls, is too much for any achievement so precious. O remember that under the roof of your lowly tenement, there might happen an event which shall cause the high arches of heaven to ring with jubilee; and that surpassing far the pomp of this world's history, is the history of many a cottage home—at which a son or a daughter turned unto righteousness becomes the reward of a parent's faithfulness, the fruit of a parent's prayers.

But, fourthly—Let me not forget that the affection of Paul, as expressed in the passage before us, was not that of a Christian parent for his children, but that of a Christian man for his kinsmen in general. It was in love for the souls of all his relatives that he could have endured any sacrifice by which he might have procured salvation to them. It was an affection which went round the whole circle of his relationship; and, under the impulse of which, we would not confine our apostolic zeal and activity to the single object of Christianizing the young of our own family, but would lay ourselves out for the souls of others of our kindred—whether they lived with us under the same roof, or exchanged with us the visits of a familiar and frequent hospitality. And we cannot look upon this extension of the duty, without adverting to a most powerful and a most peculiar obstacle in the way of it—a certain mysterious delicacy, most deeply felt in many a bosom, though most difficult to be analysed—a repugnance even to talk of Christianity in the hearing of parents, of brethren, or more distant relatives, in the spirit of religious tenderness—and a repugnance that would almost strengthen into a moral impossibility, did we propose to urge upon them the Christianity of their own souls. However indescribable this antipathy is, yet we are confident of our speaking to the inward experience of many, when we affirm the existence of it; and that in truth it is often stronger and more sensitive far in reference to our own kindred than in reference to any of our more distant and general companionship. The solitary Christian of that household, where all but himself are yet carnally-minded and of the world, feels as if spell-bound among the entanglements of an insuperable delicacy; nor can he find utterance at all for the things of sacredness among the parents and the sisters and the other inmates and daily familiars even of a much-loved relationship; and the seriousness, wherewith his heart has of late been visited, lodges there in solitude and in silence—as if ashamed to disclose itself in the midst of a now uncongenial society; and, marvellous to tell, it can experience a greater freedom and facility of religious converse with the irreligious neighbours, than it can with the religious members of his own family. And thus, by an inexplicable peculiarity of temperament, do the nearest of relatives often maintain on that topic which most nearly concerns them, a dead and immovable silence, and which for the world they cannot break; and though posting on to eternity together, yet on all the prospects and all the preparations of eternity their lips are sealed; and while on every other partnership, whether of interest or of feeling, there is the frankest and the easiest communication—yet, on this mightiest interest of all, each wraps himself in his own impregnable disguise, and positively dares not lay it open. It is so very singular, that it almost looks like a Satanic influence—a sorcery by which the prince of darkness obstructs this sort of reciprocal interchange in families, lest his kingdom should suffer by it—a device by which he guards the very approaches of religious conversation, and so scares even the devout and desirous Christian away from it, that he stands speechless and awe-struck even in the presence of his own brother. It is indeed a curious anomaly of our nature, and might well excite to philosophic speculation; but it has a higher claim upon our notice, in that it stays the operation of the gospel leaven among men, and forms one of the sorest impediments to the growth of Christianity in the world.

We feel the whole difficulty of advising in a matter which so many have found to be unconquerable, and yet, formidable as the difficulty is, we cannot help being assured of this as of all other temptations—that if you resist the devil, he will flee from you. We are persuaded that had you only courage to break the accursed incantation, a most cheering and triumphant result would often come out of it. It is our conjecture that by a frank and intrepid management of the case, it would in many instances have an issue more pleasing and more prosperous than we at first do apprehend. We believe, that, did you openly avow to your kinsman according to the flesh the recent awakening that had come upon you, and did you pour into his ear the affectionate urgency of your now Christianized regards for him—there might ensue a gratitude and a confidence that to your old and previous fellowship was altogether unknown. We are hopeful, that, by taking the direct way with that relative whom you wish to associate with yourself on the path of heaven, and telling him plainly both of sin and of the Saviour—that in his kindliness to you, and perhaps in the conversion of his own soul, your fearlessness and your faithfulness would have their reward. We have no doubt, that, did every Christian come forth in the bosom of his own household with more bold and explicit testimonies, we should at length have vastly more of Christianity in our land; and that, did our love for souls and our sense of the worth of eternity so far prevail as to force a way for us through the tremors and the delicacies of this our mysterious nature, we should at times realize within the precincts of home the noblest achievements of the missionary. That there would be a frequent, and even perhaps on occasions a fierce resistance, is unquestionable; and then the generous adventurer for human souls would be put upon his charity and his wisdom. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs," and "cast not your pearls before swine," these are the precepts which might afterwards have their turn when he had acquitted himself of the duty to confess Christ before men, and proved himself not to be ashamed of His testimony. Yet even in suffering and in silence he would preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and perhaps more emphatically than if with all eloquence and all argument. Let but the meekness of wisdom never abandon him—let peace and truth and kindness be at once the guide and the ornament of his walk—let him command that homage to his practice which he failed to obtain for his principles—let him carry that admiration for the virtues of his life which by the doctrines of his creed he could not carry—and thus what he did not by his expostulations, he might do by his example and by his prayers.

It were well that we had a conscience altogether clear in this matter; that we stood fully acquitted of what we owe to each other's souls; that we could lay our hands upon our hearts, and say that we had done all which we ought, for the purpose of rescuing from the delusion that is unto death, him who is ready to perish; that we held faithful and intrepid discourse with our fellow-pilgrims on the high topics of eternity, and did whatever wisdom could approve, even among those that are without, for awakening them from the lethargy of nature, and impressing that movement upon their spirits by which they might turn from the world unto God. We know that there are difficulties and delicacies in the way; but we also know how gladly it is that many a desirous Christian takes shelter under them. We know that the formal attempt to Christianize has often misgiven; and that there have been occasions when the whole effect of a rash and misguided enterprise has only been to call forth from the heart the reaction of a stouter and more resolute hostility than before. And upon this consideration there are men, even of religious earnestness, who have exonerated themselves from the task of religious conversation altogether. Now, there may in this be a guilty cowardice. God knoweth. There may, in this inveterate silence before men, be the cruellest indifference to the fate of their eternity. The benevolence of nature may expatiate among all the kindnesses and courtesies of the life that now is, while the benevolence of faith is most profoundly asleep to the momentous interests of the life that is to come. In a word, because of our criminal reserve, souls may have perished everlastingly; and just because Christianity is left out by us in conversation, many perhaps there are who have been confirmed in the habit of leaving it out of their concern altogether. Surely that which even the friends of the gospel deem not worthy of a place among the other topics of science, or of taste, or of politics, or of trade, or of agriculture, which takes their respective turns in every party, we may well deem not worthy of any large or very prominent place in the general system of our affairs. It is thus that by our shrinking timidity, a countenance is given to that spirit of worldliness wherewith the earth throughout all its companies is overspread; and just because Christians are not so free and frequent in their avowals as they should be, the mischief is propagated more widely and settled more inveterately than before. We are aware, at the same time, that evil might ensue from unbridled and unreasonable urgencies of talk upon this subject; and that there is a time to refrain as well as a time to venture forward. It were well, however, if amid the excuses and exonerations of which we are so fain to avail ourselves, we, like Paul, could vouch to our own consciences for the perfect sincerity wherewith we longed after the salvation of those who are around us. He could speak for himself in this matter—his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost. This heavenly judge is now looking towards us; and agreeably to that impressive passage from the book of Proverbs, He knows whether to charge us with the barbarity that would neglect the means of averting from others their awful and everlasting condemnation. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

It were well if what I have said should subserve, not merely its own proper and immediate purpose, but should serve the purpose of a general conviction regarding the state of your own souls. Ere you can be practically in good earnest about the eternity of your children, you must have in your own spirit a sense of the worth of eternal things. Ere you can labour for the good of their immortality, there must be a faith in that immortality—even the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Ere you can make a distinct and business object of their conversion from sin unto the Saviour, you must be impressed with the guilt and danger of the one, as well as the all-sufficiency of the other. And on the other hand, your habitual listlessness in the matter of family religion is an experimental proof that you are destitute of all these things. From a thing so familiar as your domestic and daily habit in reference to those of your own house; and from a thing so accessible as the state of your own heart in regard to the affection which it bears for the souls of your children—from these we may gather the evidences, we fear, of the entire spiritual destitution of many who are here present. In urging the Christian duty which lies upon you of watching over their souls, we feel as if we had to go back to a duty more elementary still—that is, of fleeing, for yourselves, from the wrath that shall come upon all those of carnal and unrenewed nature, who have not yet made the transition from death unto life; nor taken refuge in that Saviour whose blood alone can make atonement for the past, whose Spirit alone can revive and rectify the future.

LECTURE LXX.

ROMANS IX. 3.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Before bidding a final adieu to this topic on which I have at such a length detained you, I may take notice of another interesting aspect which it opens to our view. You will observe that the fervency of affection professed by Paul in this passage is all in behalf of his own countrymen; and yet none more zealous and more indefatigable than he in the labours of a Christian missionary among the distant climes and countries of the world. What gives more importance to this remark is the tendency in our own day to place these two causes in opposition to each other—as if they were conflicting interests that could not both be befriended by the same heart, or helped forward by one and the same hand. It might serve as a useful corrective to look at Paul and at the one comprehensive affection which actuated his bosom—cleaving with utmost tenacity, and with all the devotedness of a thorough patriot, to the families of his own land; and yet carrying him abroad and beyond the limits of a contracted patriotism, among all the families of the earth. The truth is, that home and foreign Christianity, instead of acting upon the heart like two forces in opposite directions, draw both the same way—so that he who has been carried forward to the largest sacrifices in behalf of the one, is the readiest for like sacrifices in behalf of the other;—the friends of the near enterprise being also, as they have opportunity, the most prompt and liberal in their friendship to the distant enterprise—recognising in man, wherever he is to be found, the same wandering outcast from the light and love of heaven, and the same befitting subject for the offers of a free salvation. We cannot therefore sympathize with those who affect an indifference to the Christianization of the heathen till the work of Christianization shall have been completed at our door. Let them be careful lest there do not lurk within them a like indifference to both—lest the feelings and the principles of all true philanthropy lie asleep in their bosoms; and they, unlike to Paul, who found room for the utmost affection towards the spiritual well-being of his own kinsfolk and the utmost activity among the aliens and idolaters of far distant lands, shall be convicted of deep insensibility to the concerns of the soul, of utter blindness to the worth of eternity.

It holds out, indeed, a marvellous exhibition of our nature, that with such dread realities as death and the judgment before us, we should be so unmoved by any fear for ourselves and by any sympathy for our fellow-men—that such should be our heedlessness or our hardihood that we can drown every gloomy anticipation, and spend whole hours of joyous companionship with those whom yet, according to our own principles, we still deem to be in the abyss of impenitency—that we can view them as on the brink of a precipice whence they are to be ingulfed in irreversible wretchedness and wo; and without so much as a friendly whisper by which to warn them of their state, can thus while away the precious intervening moments in the jest and the song and the various other fascinations of a free and festive society—that even they who wear the semblance of a more declared and ostensible seriousness, can so lend themselves to a deep and ruinous illusion, and be the instruments of cradling into a still profounder infatuation than before those familiars of their own who are speeding merrily onward to a hopeless and undone eternity. It is not that we are wholly destitute of feeling—for often they are the very men with whom we should not only rejoice when placed beside them at the hospitable board, but with whom we should weep in the hour of their dark and distressful visitation—stretching forth a hand of ready assistance in the midst of their difficulties, and bearing in our bosom a heart of kindest sympathy towards them. What other possible explanation can there then be for a phenomenon so glaring, than that we are destitute of faith?—and did the Saviour now descend to the judgment amongst us, and did the sound of the last trumpet bring the world to a pause, we fear that, even in this age of goodly profession and of gathering respect for the forms and the doctrines of godliness, there might be room for the question which Christ put to His disciples—"Verily, verily, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth?"

We now come to a less important matter—the difficulty which occurs in the third verse of this chapter, where Paul says that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Before however attempting our solution of it, on which by the way we lay no great stress, let us premise one observation on the subject of those occasional puzzles in Scripture, which have often exercised and sometimes even baffled all the ingenuities of criticism. We are aware of the objection that has been founded on them, as if they threw an air of hopeless and impracticable mystery over the pages of inspiration—as if they were utterly at variance with the character which the Bible assumes, and which infidels say it should better have supported, of being a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path—as if they darkened that road to heaven, of which it is written that a wayfaring man though a fool should not err therein—and as if they made the faith of Christians to rest on the precarious foundation of controversies that never can be settled, of hard and enigmatical sayings that can never be satisfactorily explained or clearly understood,—thus throwing a painful suspicion over the whole record of Christian doctrine, and reducing those who are carried about by every wind of new and fanciful interpretation to the state of ever learning and yet of never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Now it might serve to disarm this objection did we compare the real value of that which is palpable with that which is hidden or obscure in the passage before us. Grant that this imprecation of Paul upon himself does resist all our attempts at explanation, and abide an unsolved mystery in our hands—shall we therefore say of the casket which holds it, that any moral or intellectual treasure it may contain is useless to us because locked in the concealment of a disguise that is impenetrable? Whatever we may make of the terms by which he expresses his affection, is not the affection itself patent as the light of day? Can the most unlettered reader here mistake the high worth which an apostle sets upon eternity? This at least stands forth most unequivocally along the course of these few sentences. The sense of one little clause may be under shade, but the sentiment of the whole passage is most broadly and openly manifest. The longing of the apostle's heart after the salvation of his countrymen—the largeness of the personal surrenders that he would make to obtain it—the impressiveness of all this in the way of excitement and example to ourselves—the entire moral and practical force of the lesson which is thus held forth to us,—of these we have a most fully lucid exhibition—nor are we aware that any critical solution of the difficulty in question would at all sensibly or materially add to the power of them. In other words, within the limit of these verses there is enough of revelation for the conscience, though not enough perhaps for the curiosity of the reader. The spirit of them might be caught by the very simplest of Christ's disciples, although in the letter of them there may be a something to baffle our profoundest commentators. We have tried to expound some of the obvious instruction wherewith this passage is replete ; and if there be not enough in it to satisfy the ambition of that knowledge which puffeth up, there is at least enough in it to light up in every soul the glorious inspiration of that charity which edifieth. There may lie within its confines a yet undeveloped mystery, even as there is a spot in the sun which sensibly impairs not the force or the splendour of that luminary. And so, in the words of doubtfulness upon which we at present have alighted, there is nothing that can obscure the general character of the whole—nothing to cloud or to enfeeble the expression of its great principle, or that can in any way dim the manifestation of that Christian philanthropy which so blazed forth in the soul of our devoted apostle, whose heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was, that they might be saved.

Now we need not perhaps have stopped for the utterance of such an observation, did it not apply to the whole Bible. It cannot be denied that in this book there are some things hard to be understood, and that the intellect of man is still kept at bay by some of its yet unravelled difficulties ; but still, notwithstanding, it may be as fit an instrument for the general illumination of our species, as the sun, with all the partial obscurations which lie scattered over its surface, is fit for being the lamp of our world. For, in truth, with all its occasional difficulties, it, in every great lesson which it concerns man to know, shines forth with most unambiguous splendour. Who, for example, can misunderstand the high power and presidency which it throughout ascribes unto God—the subordination in which it places all creatures to their glorious and sovereign Creator—the great moral characteristics of truth and consistency and awful sacredness which it every where assigns to Him—His deep antipathy to sin, and the sad ruin which has followed in the train of this plague and destroyer of our species ? The grand scheme of man's recovery ; and the mission to our world of that great celestial Being who is at once its author and its finisher ; and the tidings of a purchased forgiveness in His name ; and the offered aids of a Spirit to begin and to perfect that repentance, without which we shall all likewise perish; and the great lessons of faith, and of charity, and of heavenly-mindedness, and of self-renunciation, and of crucifixion to the world that now is, and of living in the hope of a better and a lovelier world that is beyond it, and of grateful dedication to the Saviour, and of piety to God, and of peace and truth and unbounded kindness among all our fellows, and of long-suffering in the midst of provocation, and of hallowed purity, not in speech or in action only, but in the secret imaginations of the heart—these, whether in the shape of doctrine or of duty, are all written as with a sunbeam on the page of Revelation: and, let the occasional blots or shadings of a darker cast be what they may, these give an overruling splendour to the whole mass and assemblage of those materials whereof this book is composed. And thus again, like the glorious lamp of heaven, is this spiritual Sun a light that may enlighten all lands. The prying telescope of the astronomer may find spots upon the one—which nevertheless casts a broad effulgence among the habitations of men; and the keener scrutiny of critics or commentators may lead to the view of difficulties in the other—which nevertheless escape the notice of ordinary readers, who find enough of guidance in its general illumination for the business of their souls, and many is the unlettered peasant who rejoices in the light thereof. It has translated him out of darkness; and he feels surrounded by an element of sufficient transparency, both for the direction of his footsteps and for the irradiation of his hopes. It may not be an altogether unclouded luminary, yet a luminary of force and light enough for all people—providing them with a medium of noonday through which they may walk, and casting a general brightness and beauty over the whole field of their spiritual vision.

Striking indeed is the difference in point of manifestation between the accomplished theologian who has nothing but the light of erudition to carry him through the Bible, and that simple Christian in whose mind a light has been struck out between the doctrines of Scripture and the depositions of his own conscience—between him who can argue from Greek the doctrine of the atonement, and him who believes it to be true because he discerns it to be the very aliment that is needed by his soul—between the scholar who is convinced by his study of its proofs, and the sinner who is convinced by his feeling of its preciousness. The one sees his Bible to be true by the light of a bygone history, the other sees it to be true by the light of a present consciousness. To him belongs a deeper scriptural wisdom than all scholarship can bestow—a wisdom grounded on his perception of the internal evidence, as made known by the adaptations of all the doctrine which is without to all the felt necessities of the spirit which is within. That is no visionary evidence which is thus evolved between his readings of the Bible and the responses of his own heart. It is as stable and satisfying, even to the eye of intellect, as the other; and is as much more impressive as the vivacity of sentiment surpasses the coldness of mere speculation.

After these general remarks, I shall not take up so much of your time with the critical solutions which have been offered of the difficulty in the letter of the passage as I have done in attempting to unfold and to impress upon you the undoubted spirit of it. We hold it to be a triumphant vindication of the Bible from the charge now adverted to—that while the letter is occasionally shaded with obscurities, which, however, by dint of scholarship, are gradually clearing away, yet, in the whole spirit of it all is direct and intelligible and decisive. In other words, there can be no mistake in regard to that which is really of most importance; and if at times the curiosity of man should be left unappeased, yet that far higher principle of our nature, even the conscience of man, is never left without the most explicit and satisfying light on all which concerns either a Christian's peace with God or the regeneration of his heart and his walk before Him. Be assured that it is not he whose curiosity is all alive to the difficulties of Scripture, while his conscience is asleep to the clear and impressive simplicities thereof—who is the most hopeful of its disciples. And I shall therefore count it enough, if you have caught the inspiration of the apostle's ardour in behalf of human souls, and feel how incumbent it is both to long and to labour for the good of their immortality.

I accordingly do not hold it necessary to detain you by the solutions which have been given of the difficulty in the verse that is before us. If understood in the strictly literal sense of the English into which it has been rendered, it would be startling enough—for high and heroic as the virtue of a devoted patriotism is, we could never reconcile our feelings to a sentiment so monstrous as that of wishing one's-self to be eternally damned, were it possible to obtain by this step that others should be eternally saved. We are required to love our neighbours as ourselves, but this were loving them better than ourselves—besides involving in it somewhat like the impiety of a voluntary exile from God and enmity towards Him, and that everlastingly. The common interpretation that is given of this passage, though by no means the unanimous one, is, that the word *anathema* in the original, and which we read here *accursed*, was the technical expression applied to that sentence of excommunication by which the members of the Hebrew Church were put forth of its communion, and so made outcasts from all those privileges on which the countrymen of the apostle set so high a value. He had become the member of another Church that had distinct privileges of its own; and whereof the Jews would naturally imagine that Christians must have the same preference, and hold them in the same sort of exclusive regard which themselves felt for the proud distinctions of their own establishment. They would think more particularly of our apostle that, in renouncing the one, and passing over to the other, he exchanged one set of privileges for what he of course did conceive to be nobler and higher privileges still; and Paul meets this imagination by assuring them, that there is not a privilege belonging to the Christian society as a visible Church upon earth, which he would not give up most willingly if they were only to take up his place, and enter into the fellowship from which himself had been cast out. It is not that he would give up his final salvation, but that he would give up all which was short of his final salvation—that, for example, he, who made himself all things to all men if by any means he might save some, would make every lawful approximation in order to reconcile his countrymen to Christ, even though in doing so he should give such offence to all other Christians as to bring about his own expulsion from their society. He would consent to all temporal infamy and suffering, rather than that his compatriots the Jews should persevere in their obstinate rejection of the Saviour, and incur that awful destruction which he saw to be approaching. He was addressing himself in fact to men who in a great degree were strangers to the conception of a spiritual economy, or of those its spiritual privileges which had their chief place and fulfilment in eternity. Apart from these altogether, the expression of the text had all the strength which it could possibly have to a Jewish understanding, although Paul's imprecation upon himself was felt to extend no farther than to the loss of those present distinctions which belonged to him, while in communion with the Christian Church, and as a recognised member of the Christian society. It is somewhat in this strain that commentators have attempted to vindicate this effusion of the apostle—though after all it may not be capable of full elucidation. There might really have been a distempered extravagance in the mind of the apostle upon this subject, even as there seems to have been in Moses, when, pleading for the forgiveness of the children of Israel, he offered himself as an expiation for their sins. "Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written." The proposal met with rebuke and resistance in the answer that was given to it—"And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may just take notice of an interpretation which I do think the original admits of, although not much insisted on by Scripture critics. The translation really appears more literal, when instead of being rendered 'I could wish,' it is rendered 'I did wish' that myself were accursed or separated from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. This signification has the further advantage of being historically true. Paul at one time did—for the sake of his countrymen, for what he conceived to be the honour and the good of his nation—embark in a most resolute opposition to Christ and to His faith, and would gladly have consented to be in a state of everlasting disunion from Him: and this it is quite pertinent to quote now, in proof of the affection which he still retained for the children of Israel. He appeals to the zeal manifested then in their behalf; and assures them that the same spirit, misdirected though it was at a former period of his life, of fervent and devoted attachment to those of his own nation, still remained with him—although under the guidance of other views, and now directed to other objects. It is analogous to other appeals made by the apostle, when called to make his own vindication. "I have served God with all good conscience unto this day." "This I confess to thee, that so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all the things which are written in the Law and the Prophets." And then in this place, "I protest that I have great heaviness of heart, for on your account I did indeed wish myself separated from that very Christ, whom now I press upon your acceptance."

LECTURE LXXI.

ROMANS IX. 4-10, 12.

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called; that is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, ... it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger."

Ver. 4.—'Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.'

After the utterance of his affection for the Jews, he enters upon the record of their distinctions; and to no nation under the sun does there belong so proud, so magnificent a heraldry. No minstrel of a country's fame was ever furnished so richly with topics; and the heart and fancy of our apostle seem to kindle at the enumeration of them. They were first Israelites, or descendants of a venerable patriarch—then, selected from among all the families of the earth they were the adopted children of God, and to them belonged the glory of this high and heavenly relationship; and with their ancestors were those covenants made which enveloped the great spiritual destinies of the human race; and the dispensation of the law from that mountain which smoked at the touch of the Divinity was theirs; and that solemn temple service where alone the true worship of the Eternal was kept up for ages was theirs; and as their history was noble from its commencement by the fathers from whom they sprang, so at its close did it gather upon it a nobility more wondrous still by the mighty and mysterious descendant in whom it may be said to have terminated—even Him who at once is the root and the offspring of David, and with the mention of whose name our apostle finishes this stately climax of their honours—'of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.' They are far the most illustrious people on the face of the world. There shines upon them a transcendental glory from on high; and all that the history, whether of classical or heroic ages, hath enrolled of other nations, are but as the lesser lights of the firmament before it.

Ver. 5.—'Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.'

We do not insist upon this very unequivocal expression of our Saviour's divinity, in proof of the doctrine. This is not necessary, for in every simple and unsophisticated mind an instantaneous belief must be lighted up—provided only that the Bible is held to be true. There is a delusion to which the controversial style of almost all our theology has given rise—that our chief business with every doctrine of Christianity is to prove it. Now, this is not true. Our chief business with every doctrine is to proceed upon it. To bring it home to our conviction, there may be often, as in the present instance, no need of argument—for it may effectually be brought home, and that immediately, by a simple and authoritative statement. And it is a deep practical delusion, that after you have lodged a truth in the understanding, where it lies stored among the other articles of your orthodoxy, your concern with it is all over; and you may now regard it as a matter settled and set by. Now, instead of this, your concern with it is only yet beginning; and so far from being done with it because you now have reached a faith in its reality, that faith is but the commencement of those various influences which it is fitted to have upon the heart and history of a believer. The effect of our controversial theology is to make us regard the doctrine itself as the ultimate landing place, at which when we arrive we may go to rest. But in Scripture, instead of the place at which we land, it is in fact regarded as the place from which we start. A doctrine is never revealed to us merely for its own sake: it is for the sake of something produced by itself, and therefore ulterior to itself. In the contests of human authorship the terminating object is to gain the intellect of man to some doctrinal position. In this book of divine authorship, the intellect is but the avenue through which a new impulse may be given to his affections, or a new direction may be impressed upon his conduct. And thus the divinity of our Saviour, so far from being but one of the articles or abstractions of a metaphysical creed, is proposed to us in the Bible chiefly for the moral and spiritual account to which it is capable of being turned; and, agreeably to this, let us very briefly advert to two of those lessons which may be urged upon you from the consideration that Christ is God.

The first lesson is that of condescension to those of lower estate than ourselves. This is the very lesson which the apostle urges upon the Philippians; and it is just for giving enforcement and a motive to this plain and practical and every-day morality of the Christian life, that he announces to us the divinity of the Saviour. He brings down this mystery from heaven for the purpose of lighting up by it a mutual kindness between man and man upon earth—so that in his hand, instead of being as in the hand of Athanasius, a firebrand to burn up and to destroy, it is that mild and peaceful luminary which sheds over the face of human society the radiance of a virtue the most beautiful and the most gracious. "In lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;" and "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;" and "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

It is for the enhancement, then, of this moral lesson that we are told of the dignity of that Personage who lighted upon our world, and that on an errand of beneficence and mercy to its sinful generations—that it was not the visit of some fellow subject from some distant place of the creation, but a visit from the Sovereign Himself, who owneth all creation as His monarchy, and upholdeth all the things that are therein by the word of His power—that the earth which we tread upon was on that occasion honoured by the footsteps, not of angel or of archangel, but by the footsteps of God manifest in the flesh—and that He, in bowing Himself down to the lowliest offices of humanity for our sakes, did so for the purpose of an example, as well as for the purpose of an expiation, even that we might look on no living and created thing as beneath the notice or the condescension of our services. The distance upward between us and that mighty mysterious Being who let Himself down from heaven's high concave upon our lowly platform, surpasses by infinity the distance downward between us and anything that breathes. Under the impulse of such a contemplation, not only might the lordliest of us all condescend to the wretched and worthless of our own species, whom either misfortune or crime has made the veriest outcasts of humanity; but we feel ourselves carried by it beyond and beneath the limits of our species, and that it should extend the compassionate regards of every Christian over the whole of sentient and suffering nature. The high court of Parliament is not degraded by its attentions and its cares in behalf of inferior creatures—else the sanctuary of heaven has been degraded by its counsels in behalf of the world we occupy; and in the execution of which the Lord of heaven Himself relinquished the highest seat of glory in the universe, and sojourned amidst contempt and cruelty and contradiction of sinners in this its humble and accursed territory. By our benevolence to all that is beneath us, we only imitate the glorious munificence that is above us, and though we have now lingered for such a time upon these few verses that even the beauties of a lesson so delightful must not tempt us to expatiate any further—yet we cannot refrain from one observation on the contrast which is suggested by it between the theology of the Bible and the theology, which although made up of the very same doctrinal positions, is urged by human expounders in the spirit of a fierce and intolerant dogmatism. That article of faith which in the one theology is a moral principle, and carries us forward at once to its moral application, so that we instantly find ourselves in the midst either of the most easy and familiar graces, or of the most noble virtues by which our nature can be adorned—undergoes in the other theology a transmutation into a thing of another air and aspect altogether, a dry hard ferocious metaphysical dogma, glaring frightfully upon us with an eye of menace, and set round in characters of dread and denunciation against all who shall refuse to fall down and worship it. This is not the way in which the triumphs of genuine orthodoxy are won; and the man who exemplifies the god-like virtues of Him who is at once our God and Saviour will do more to recommend the truth as it is in Jesus, than the stoutest and sturdiest polemic who has nought but the armour of controversy to brandish in its cause. The benign condescensions of a Howard who went about continually doing good, will do more to accredit that evangelical system which he embraced so cordially, than the boisterous invectives of a Horsley—even with all the might and momentum of that polemic arm which he lifted in defence of it. It is not that his victory was doubtful, or that on the field of conflict with his adversary he did not achieve a most signal and conclusive triumph. But it was a triumph on the arena of intellect alone; and there is not a truth in Christianity which is not divested of more than half its power to convince and conciliate, if, propped up only by argument, there is no exhibition given of its mastery over the affections and the principles of our moral nature. It is not by the warfare of argument, but by the meekness of wisdom, that we obtain the conquests of the faith. It is when urged in the gentle and peaceable spirit which is from above that truth is omnipotent, instead of being urged in that wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God.

This second lesson is founded on the subservience of this doctrine to the peace of the believer, even as the first is founded on its subservience to his charity. We have already said that the divinity of Christ enhanced the worth of His example, in those condescending services which He rendered to the world. We now say that His divinity enhanced the worth of that expiation, which to us is the most precious of His services. However unfathomable in all its depth that mystery might be which angels desired to look into, certain it is that the most unlettered Christian can apprehend a sufficiency, and can draw a comfort from the reflection that the Saviour who died for him was God. There is none, we deem, who has ever trembled at the thought of that offended sacredness against which he has sinned, who has not felt a most significant and a most substantial consolation from the thought that there is an equal sacredness in the atonement which has been made for sin. There is none who has been duly arrested by a sense of that guilt, against which the truth and the justice and the holiness of the Divinity are all leagued together for its everlasting condemnation, who, if a solid and satisfying hope have arisen from the midst and the profoundness of this despair, does not feel that it is intimately linked with the divinity of Him who poured out His soul unto the death—even that the world's guilt might be washed away. That the dignity of the sacrifice which has been made is commensurate with the dignity of the law which has been violated —that the force of the divine wrath against moral evil has had the force of a divine propitiation to neutralize it—that if the sin of the transgressor brought forth an arm of infinite strength to destroy, the sacrifice for sin is one of such prevailing force and efficacy as to have brought forth an arm of infinite strength to save him—In all this, my brethren, there is something more than the unmeaning jingle of a mere sonorous or scholastic antithesis. There is many a disciple who feels it to be the very aliment of his confidence and peace, that Christ is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

Ver. 6.—'Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel.'

He had just said of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh, that they were Israelites; and that to them belonged the promises. And yet it might appear that these promises had not been verified upon them—seeing that they were on the eve of being rejected by God, for that by this time they had rejected His Son. This calls out the apostle to a vindication of God's truth in the promises which He had made of old respecting this people. His word in these promises had not failed in its effect, although the whole of nominal Israel should not be saved. All the descendants of Israel were named after his name, but that did not constitute them to be of the true Israel—in like manner as he had said before that 'he is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.'

Ver. 7.—'Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.'

The promise was given to Israel—yet it no more followed from this that all the descendants of Israel should have an interest therein, than that all the seed of Abraham should be included in the fulfilment of the promised blessing—because, when announced to him at the first, it was nakedly and generally expressed, without any restriction of it to one part of his seed more than to another. In the twelfth chapter of Genesis, it is stated, that the Lord appeared unto Abraham and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Yet we afterwards read in the twenty-first chapter of a very numerous division of his posterity who were to have no part in this inheritance, even the descendants of Ishmael—"for in Isaac shall thy seed be called;" and the bondwoman and her son were cast out accordingly. This part of the Old Testament history is adverted to in another of Paul's epistles; and for the very purpose of illustrating the distinction between the nominal and the true Israel, between the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, between the earthly Jerusalem which then subsisted in the bondage of her yet unextinguished ritual, and the Jerusalem which is above and is free —and so of vindicating that great step of the divine administration by which so many even of Israel's natural descendants were put forth of God's spiritual kingdom, and admittance was given to the men of other tribes and other families.

Ver. 8.—'That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.'

The object of the apostle is to break down that confidence in the flesh (as he terms it in his epistle to the Philippians) by which his countrymen were so generally blinded; and in virtue of which they arrogated so much of what might be termed a religious nobility to themselves, just because of their lineal descent from the patriarch Abraham. To meet and rectify this imagination, he goes back with them to their own primeval history. He first shows how Isaac superseded Ishmael—how the child of faith, born out of due time and in opposition to all the likelihoods of nature, superseded the child of ordinary descent, and in whose birth there was nothing of the miraculous—thereby giving one instance of a disinheritance that God had passed even on the posterity of the patriarch in whom they gloried; and of another posterity being formed for him in virtue of a gracious promise on the part of God, and of a faith in that promise on the part of man. It is thus that he laboured, by such types and symbols as their own history furnished, to bring down the arrogance of those who vaunted in Abraham as their father, and said, "We be his seed, and were never in bondage to any man." It is thus that he prepared the understandings of those whom he addressed for another disinheritance—even of those who grounded all their imagined privileges on a carnal obedience, and sought not to be justified by faith. And it is thus also that he typified by Isaac, the child of promise, and given out of the course of nature and experience to that patriarch who against hope believed in hope, all those who shall afterwards walk in the steps of faithful Abraham, and become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus—who are born again, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ver. 9.—'For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.'

In this verse he specifies the limitation that was actually made on the general promise unto Abraham's seed, whereby the descendants of Ishmael, although they could plead the same natural relationship to the patriarch, were nevertheless excluded from that more close and peculiar relationship to God, into which he was pleased to admit the descendants of Isaac.

Ver. 10, 12.—'And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac... it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.'

He here states a further limitation, and shows still more strikingly of how little avail was the general promise given at the first, for all and every of the descendants of Abraham. There might appear a good natural reason why Isaac should be preferred before Ishmael—the son of the wife before the son of the bondmaid; and besides, as this preference took place after their births, and after the insolent behaviour of the one in mocking the other, it might warrant the idea that his rejection was a thing of desert and of moral government, and not a thing of absolute and antecedent sovereignty on the part of God. It therefore brings this out more unequivocally, when the election is made between two children of the same mother; and, moreover, when, in opposition to the natural claims of seniority, the elder is rejected and the younger is chosen. There is even something in this latter peculiarity that might be made to bear on the fulfilment which took place in the days of the apostle, when the first were made last and the last first; or, in other words, when the Jews, that ancient people, were rejected, and God, in the course of His now more advanced administration, chose the Gentiles in their place. This was matter of prophecy and preordination anterior to the birth of the children, as is evident from the intimation of God Himself to Rebecca, of which we read in the book of Genesis. And as by the former instance of a limitation on the general promise, the apostle teaches that the children by faith and by miraculous regeneration have the preference over the children of nature—so, by the present instance, he rather points to the sovereignty of God. In looking to the one, we are led to connect an admission into the great spiritual family with the new birth that takes place in men upon earth; in looking to the other, we are led to connect it with the mysterious counsels and destinations of eternity, with the high purposes of God in heaven.

Thus much at all events is clear in the apostle's argument. There was a promise given to Abraham in regard to his posterity; yet one branch of that posterity was rejected without invalidating the truth of the promise. After this first restriction the promise was to the seed of Isaac; yet one great division of his offspring was also rejected, without those Jews against whom the apostle now reasoned deeming the promise to have been at all violated. Last of all it was restricted to Jacob or Israel; and what the apostle argues is, that a still further rejection might take place even of his descendants, and yet God not be chargeable with having uttered a promise that was of none effect. As with all the former and successive excisions that were made on the posterity of Abraham, still a portion was reserved on whom the promised blessings had their verification or their fulfilment—so, in the tremendous excision that was about to take place by the utter destruction of the Jewish polity, a remnant might be saved. And not only so, but by movements yet undisclosed in the womb of futurity, and by the new light which these should evolve on the sense and bearing of the ancient prophecies, might there be evinced such an enlargement of the family of Abraham, as should harmonize with all the former passages of Scripture history in regard to it, and, so far from falsifying, shed a lustre of consistency and truth over all its declarations.

I have the feeling on this part of our chapter, that without a very extended comparison of passages both in the Old and the New Testament, which were more properly addressed through the medium of authorship to a student in his closet, than from the pulpit to a listener in the church, I cannot make full exhibition of those mystic harmonies between the one and the other, which, though less obvious to the general eye, are, to the devoted inquirer after the truth and meaning of the sacred volume, both most satisfying and most precious; and which serve to convince him that it is one wondrous design which runs through this composition of many ages—one great presiding spirit that has harmonized and that actuates the whole. We feel most thoroughly persuaded, that, without entering upon the regions of fancy at all, even the most literal and sober of our ordinary Christians, if he only give time and patience to the study, will reap the most substantial conviction of a marvellous, a supernatural accordance between the two dispensations; and that, as on the one hand, he will find even the books of Moses to be impregnated with gospel, so, on the other hand, he will find the doctrine which apostles taught, after being visited with the light and enlargement of Pentecost, to be but the expansion of an earlier dawn—the development of truths that were dimly shadowed forth in the imagery of the Mosaic ritual. We ask but the perseverance of his attention, and without any aid from the imaginative faculties of his nature, we promise him the discovery of many traces and analogies that are now hidden from his eyes; and which, as evincing that the one economy has given its impress to the other, will, at the same time, evince that both are the productions of a loftier and more recondite wisdom than that of man, and that both have proceeded from the same author. And this holds, not alone in the peculiarities of the Jewish ceremonial, but also in the passages of the Jewish history—which things, says the apostle of one of its plainest narratives, are an allegory. It is thus that the age of our earliest patriarchs was but the morning of a lengthened day, whose gradually increasing light shone more brightly along the track of its advancement, but still shone on the same truths now disclosed to the eye in fuller manifestation—even as the sun in the firmament has not altered the landscape on which there rested his twilight obscurity a few hours before, but only invests the same objects in a clearer element of vision, only irradiates the whole more gloriously.

And I might here advert to a very frequent experience of Christians; and that is their growing relish, as they advance in life, for the types, and the prophecies, and the sketches of character, and the strains of olden inspiration, and the many beauteous passages of most pleasing and picturesque history, and the description of that whole machinery even to the minutest parts in it of Israel's figurative or symbolical Church, which are so abundantly met with in the Old Testament. Even those stories which wont to charm them in early boyhood, while they preserve all the delight of this association, now recur to them with the force of an augmented interest, because they now see them to be throughout pervaded by the character and the meaning of their own spiritual dispensation. Like the disciples of Emmaus their hearts burn within them, while their understandings are opened to understand these Scriptures; and when recognising Christ in every page, they are made to behold the bearing and the significancy of the things which are written in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning Him. Very pleasant as to the mind of good Bishop Horne were the songs of Zion, when every morning called him anew to their study, and every evening found his spirit more satisfied than before with their richness—very pleasant to many a humble Christian are the things which God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. It is as if the delights of imagination were superadded to the delights of piety, when the doctrines of the new are beheld in the drapery of the old dispensation; and if there be any aged here present, who, exempted from the cares that engrossed the morning or the middle of their days, can now afford to live and to look more heavenward than before—we promise them, not a different gospel in the earlier from what they have found in the later Scriptures, but the same gospel seen through a veil of ever-brightening transparency, and heightened by the zest of many dear and youthful remembrances. It is thus that, in the study of the Old Testament, the faded spirits, the dim and the decaying lights of age have been revived again; and in the solace and satisfaction of its repeated perusal, they have experienced of the things that be recorded there, that they are written, not alone for older generations, but for our admonition also on whom the latter ends of the world have come.

We are aware that some will concur with us, in looking upon these as the befitting studies of age, just because they regard all typical and all prophetical interpretations as so many senilities —even as Voltaire, in the examples which he has quoted of the aberrations of the human understanding, along with the case of Roger Bacon having written upon witchcraft, brings forward also that of Sir Isaac Newton having in his declining life written a commentary upon the Book of Revelation. Now fully admitting, as we do, that manifold have been the visions and the vagaries of those who have adventured too far either on the field of prophecy or in the work of spiritualizing the Old Testament, yet we confidently affirm, that none can enter upon this walk of contemplation with intelligence and candour without being satisfied of a most substantial accordancy between the Old and the New Testaments—that they are indeed the two witnesses of Heaven speaking the same things; and, instead of emitting such cross lights as are fitted to bewilder the eye of the observer, they are the two candlesticks which man hath not planted, but which stand before the God of the whole earth. And as to our great philosopher, who transferred his mighty intellect from the study of the works of God to the study of His word, this may have taken place at the decline of his years, but most certainly not at the decline of his understanding. The truth is, that he felt a kindredness between his old and his new contemplations—that after having seen farther than all who went before him into the godlike harmonies of the world, he was tempted to search and at length did behold the traces of a wisdom no less marvellous in the godlike harmonies of the word—that after having looked, and with steadfastness, for years on the mazy face of heaven, and evolved thencefrom the magnificent cycles of astronomy, he then turned him to Scripture, and found, in the midst of now unravelled obscurities, that its cycles of prophecy were equally magnificent—and whether he cast his regards on the Book of Revelation or on the Book of Daniel, who, placed on the eminence of a sublime antiquity, looked through the vista of many descending ages, and eyed from afar the structure and the society of modern Europe,—he, whose capacious mind had so long been conversant with the orbits and the periods of the natural economy, could not but acknowledge the footsteps of the same presiding divinity in the still higher orbits of that spiritual economy which is unfolded in the Bible. And while we cannot but lament the deadly mischief which the second-rate philosophy of infidels has done to the inferior spirits of our world, we feel it an impressive rebuke on their haughty pretensions, that all the giants and the men of might in other days, the Newtons, and the Boyles, and the Lockes, and the Bacons of high England, have worshipped so profoundly at its shrine. But chief of these is our great Sir Isaac, who, throned although he be by universal suffrage as the very prince of philosophers, is still the most attractive specimen of humanity which the world ever saw, and, just because the meekness of his Christian worth so softens while it irradiates the majesty of his genius: And never was there realized in the character of man so rare and so beauteous a harmony, that he who stands forth to a wondering species of loftiest achievement in science, should nevertheless move so gently and so gracefully among his fellow-men—not more honoured for the glory he won on the field of discovery, than loved by all for the milder glories of his name—*his* being the modest, the unpretending graces of a childlike nature—*his* being the pious simplicity of a cottage patriarch.*

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* It must be owned, however, that with all the sound philosophy which he evinced in the general question of the Christian Evidences—even as Bacon did in the general view which he gave of the methods of investigation—so, as the latter failed in his more special disquisitions on the particular phenomena and laws of Nature—did the former alike fail, there is good reason to believe, in his understanding both of particular texts in the Bible, and particular doctrines of Christianity.

LECTURE LXXII.

ROMANS IX. 11, 13-24.

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth)... As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

We have read these verses at once and together, because of the one principle which runs through them all—even the unexcepted sovereignty of God, in the exercise of which He is so absolute, and at the same time so incomprehensible. Many of you will recollect, that in former parts of this Epistle the same doctrine met us on our way; and that we at the time bestowed a very lengthened discussion upon it. To revive that argument in all its fulness, merely because months have elapsed since its delivery, would in fact be making a barrier of this passage through which we should never find our way, and compelling ourselves to be for ever stationary. I must therefore be content with as summary a recapitulation as possible, that we may be enabled, ere taking leave, to bring not merely this passage but also this chapter to a conclusion. My apology, as heretofore, for meddling at all with a topic that is deemed by many to be so stubborn and so hopeless, is, that we really are not at liberty to blink any of those informations which the Scripture sets before us; and if on the one hand we should not go out of our way to meet a theme that has been so burdened with controversy as this—neither ought we to go out of our way to shun this theme whenever obtruded upon our notice as it is here in the record of the counsel of God. While I have already endeavoured to grapple with such difficulties as I hold to be conquerable in this high argument, I will frankly confess what the other difficulties are which appear to me beyond the treatment of human strength or human sagacity to deal with, and before which we should bow in silence till the mystery of God is finished and made known to us. We think that the passage now read brings that line of demarcation into view which marks off the one set of difficulties from the other; and it is our honest aim in the management of this question, instead of ministering to the gratification of an idle or speculative curiosity, so to shape our observations as that they shall recommend the gospel of Jesus Christ to the free acceptance of all, and have a bearing on the great interests of practical godliness.

The first point then which we have already laboured to impress is, that there is no such thing as chance or contingency in any department of nature—that this principle, so readily admitted in regard to the world of matter, should also be extended to the world of mind—that if the one have its laws of motion and its regular successions and its unvarying processes, the other has its laws of thought and of feeling; and, in virtue of these, has all its processes alike regular and alike unvarying—that in neither is there aught so monstrous as an event uncaused, or coming forth of the womb of nonentity without having a progenitor in some event that went before it; and if not uncaused, then necessary, having the same certain and precise dependence on something preceding itself which the posterior has on the prior term of any sequence,—so that the phenomena of thinking and feeling and willing and doing, in the spiritual department of nature, do as surely result from the previous constitution which has been given to it as any of the varied phenomena in the material department result from its constitution. According to this view, the history of our species may be regarded as one vast progression carried forward by definite footsteps; and with the state of each individual as surely fixed at every moment of time by the laws of mental nature as is the situation of any planet above or of any particle of dust below by the physical laws which are established in the material world.

This is that doctrine of philosophical necessity, whose ablest advocate is President Edwards of America—a clergyman of whom we might have feared that the depth of his philosophy would have spoiled him of the simplicity that is in Christ, did we not recollect that it is not against all philosophy that we are warned in the Bible, but only against vain philosophy; and of whom we might have feared that his transcendent ability for science would have hurt his sacredness, did we not recollect that it is not all science which the Bible denounces, but only the science that is falsely so called: And it does reconcile us to the efforts of highest scholarship in the defence and illustration of our faith when, looking to Edwards, we behold the most philosophical of all theologians at the same time the humblest and the holiest of men — the most powerful in controversy with the learned, and yet the most plain and powerful of address to the consciences of a plain unlettered congregation—the most successful in finding his way through the mazes of metaphysical subtlety, and yet the honoured instrument of many awakenings, the most successful in the work of winning souls.

This first consideration on the side of a strict and determinate necessity, even in the world of mind as in that of matter, might be suggested by a mere view of nature to the philosophical observer of its sequences and its laws; but our second consideration is founded on the view of nature's God. It seems hard to deny Him, either a prescience over all the futurities, or a sovereignty over all the events of that universe which Himself did create; or that, sitting as we conceive Him to do on a throne of omnipotence, there should be so much as one department of His vast empire, where His power does not fix all, and His intelligence does not foresee all. It greatly enhances this argument, when the department in question happens to be far the highest and noblest in creation; and it does seem to place our doctrine on very secure vantage-ground—that the denial of it would appear to involve the degradation of heaven's high Monarch from entire and unexcepted supremacy, not over the material world, but certainly over the spiritual world. The apostle contends for as great a mastery on the part of God over the spirits which He has formed, as the potter has over the clay which he fashions as it pleases him; but the adversaries of an overruling necessity in mind as well as in matter, would limit God as well as man to a mere dominion of clay—or, in other words, while they admit that it is the strength of His almighty arm which gives impulse to all the particles, and both their place and their movement to the most unwieldy masses of mute and passive and unconscious materialism, they would strip Him of the like ascendency over the moral world; they would people the whole of His living creation with a host of wayward and independent forces, in the agency of which the world of intelligence and of life took its own random direction, and drifted away from the control of Him who formed and who upholds it. For, really, should anything happen, not because the Creator hath so appointed it, but because of some power and liberty in the creature, that thing is beyond the scope of the sovereignty of God—it hath made its appearance in this universe by Him unbidden and unwilled—the history of men is abandoned to a wild misrule, through the caprice and confusion of which not even Omniscience itself can descry beforehand any character of certainty; and in as far as the history of men is at all mingled with or has influence on the history of things, there is a vast progression of events over which God has no hold, and that wilders in loose and lawless contingency away from Him. We vainly try to reconcile with this imagination, either the foreknowledge or the supremacy of God—impossible as it is that the eye even of His prophecy can look any way through the descending steps of a series liable at every turn to the intervention of what is purely self-originated and spontaneous, or that the hand of His power can have the entire guidance and government thereof. This consideration obtains great additional force on seeing, as we do experimentally every day, how closely interwoven causes the most minute are with consequences the most momentous in the history of human affairs. It is quite familiar to us, that the word, or thought, or feeling of a moment might germinate a big and a busy story—that on what appeared the accidental meeting of two individuals in a street, such events and arrangements might turn as shall give a wholly new direction to the futurity of both—that in this way, on the very humblest of incidents the very greatest passages of history have been suspended; and could all the movements of a nation's policy be traced to their mysterious springs in the character or circumstances of the actors concerned in them—that what in itself looked an unimportant casualty, drew the fortune of many nations, and the successive evolution of many centuries in its train. In a world so linked and constituted as ours, if the destination of God do not reach to its things of greatest minuteness, then are its things of greatest magnitude beyond the reach of

His ascendency. If He ordain not the fall and the flight of every sparrow, then it is not He who ordains the rise and fall of empires. If He reign not supreme in every little chamber where the passions and the purposes of men are formed, then is He divested of all power and of all presidency in the larger transactions of our world. If He have not the command over every latent spring in the mechanism of human society, then must that mechanism drift uncontrollably away from Him. And thus it is argued, that if all things do not fall out with fixed and determinate certainty upon earth, He who has been styled its governor occupies in heaven but the semblance of a throne. His are the mock ensigns of authority; and if man be not a necessary agent, God is a degraded Sovereign.

Our third consideration is, that, let this necessity be as rigid and adamantine as it may, it leaves all the motives and all the influences of human activity precisely where it found them. Although God is the primary, the overruling cause of every one event, whether in the world of mind or of matter, this does not supersede the proximate and the instrumental causes which come immediately before it. Although He worketh all in all, yet if it be by means that He worketh, the application of these means is still indispensable. It is so far the consummation of a good harvest, which never comes round without labour on our earth below, and the genial influences of shower and of sunshine from the heaven above. And it is equally so for the attainment of any good in human life—in pressing forward to which man never thinks of acting upon that extended contemplation which reaches from the first decree of God in eternity to the final destination in which that decree has its accomplishment. He comes in as it were at an intermediate part of the series, and enters at once into close and busy engagement with those terms of it which succeed to each other at the place that he occupies. In labouring, for example, after an earthly fortune, he never thinks of mounting upwards to the purpose of the Divine mind regarding it; and scarcely ever of reaching his anticipations forward, either to the sum which shall be realized at death, or which, after the accumulation and perhaps the reverses of future years, shall fall into the hands of his children's children. There is a darkness which hangs over the distant past which he makes no attempt to penetrate—there is a darkness which hangs over the distant future, that he as little attempts to penetrate. Instead of acting the part of a speculatist with the things which lie remotely away from him, he acts with all intensity and practical earnestness on the things which are at hand. They are the likelihoods of the present adventure—they are the means which he possesses and the arrangements which are held out to him for his next speculation—they are the openings of trade and of correspondence which lie immediately before him—they are the calculations which he makes upon existing appearances, of the returns that might arise from his existing operations—these are what set his utmost desire and his utmost diligence agoing, and just under the excitement of a hope after the proceeds which he longs and which he labours to realize. His ambition, his keen and unsated appetite, his legitimate aim for the provision, and then his interminable aspirations after the splendour of a rising family, the ardent spirit of rivalry with competitors on the same gainful walk of merchandise with himself, and the powerful charm which the fortune and magnificence that lie in golden perspective before him have over his sanguine imagination—these may be the instruments in the hand of God for insuring some precise destination that may have been in the view of the divine mind from the infinity that is behind us; and yet with man, who never once looks backward to that infinity, these may be the very stimuli which operate on his heart, and make him the busy, earnest, and aspiring creature that he is. And just, my brethren, as with the business of working for your interest in time, so it is with the business of working for your interest in eternity. I have no wish to theorize you into the doctrine of predestination, but rather to convince you that predestination—an article though it be of my own and our Church's creed—has no more to do with the present and the practical business of your Christianity, than it has to do with the present and the practical business of your counting-houses. It is in the religious as it is in the trading world. You fetch not your inducements from the hidden things that lie shrouded from mortal eye in the eternity which is past, neither do you fetch them from the things that be alike hidden to us in the yet untravelled depths of the eternity which is to come; but you walk in the light which is immediately around you. With the decree that it is written in the book of heaven, with its corresponding fulfilment to be manifested on the closing day of this world's history,—these are the secret things which belong unto God, and with these you have positively nothing to do. But there are revealed things which belong unto yourselves and to your children, and with these you have to do. Repent, or you shall perish—with that you have to do. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved—with that also you have to do. Cease to do evil, and learn to do well—these are matters in hand, and with these you have to do. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near—this carries in it the urgency of a very pressing and present application, and with this you have to do. God has His designs, and He employs the very passions and the very interests which we are now addressing for the accomplishment of them. Yet man's part is not to speculate on these designs, but to be moved by this passion, even the fear of the coming wrath, and to proceed upon this high interest, even the good of his coming immortality. We are now standing together at one link of that extended chain which reaches from God's first decree to your final destination ; and the fastening of that link is by Him who alone gives earnestness to the voice of the preacher, who alone gives susceptibility to the heart of the hearers—yet the one is at his post when, ignorant as he is both of decrees and of destinies, he, arrested by the worth of your imperishable souls, beckons you to that plain and palpable way whereon they shall be saved; and you are at yours, when, alike ignorant of matters that are indeed too high for us, you catch the impression of a kindred feeling from his lips, and simply and practically betake yourselves to that way. It is thus that the high predestinations of Heaven affect not the proceedings or the business of practical Christianity upon earth ; and that while God, on the one hand, preordains all the children of His election unto life—man, on the other, presses forward unto life by putting to the utmost strenuousness of their laborious and busy play all the activities of his nature.

Our next consideration, and the last we can propound with any degree of confidence—feeling, as we do, that we are now approaching that limit which separates the known from the unknown—is, that as the doctrine of necessity thus understood seems to affect not our most familiar motives to human activity, so neither does it seem to affect the familiar estimate which we are in the habit of forming every day with regard to the moral character, whether it be a character of vice or of virtue, in human actions. There is a species of force that does exonerate and excuse a man from all moral responsibility—the force of external violence, and by which he is compelled against his will to do that which in the matter of it is wrong; as to inflict, for example, some dire and dreadful perpetration with his hand, which in his heart, and with all the feelings and principles of his spontaneous nature, he utterly recoils from. The case is altogether different, when, instead of the deed being against the will, the will goes along with the deed; and when, instead of being driven thereto by a strength that is without him, which he finds to be resistless, he is prompted thereto by the strength of an inclination within him, which also proves to be resistless. The first necessity does away all the moral characteristics; but the second necessity, it will be found, so far from doing away, serves the more to fix and to enhance them. The man into whose hand you have forced the instrument of death, and compelled against all his strong and struggling antipathies to plunge it into the bosom of a friend, you would never regard as the object of any condemnation. The man, on the other, who has done the same act, but done it wilfully, either to execute his revenge or to satiate his thirst for blood, you never fail to execrate as a monster; and if told of one who had a doubly greater strength within him of murderous disposition than another, so that you incurred twice a greater danger by meeting him in a lone place, you would hold him to be doubly the more fiendish and execrable of the two. And it is the same with all the other vicious propensities. The stronger they are, the more hateful, nay, the more criminal and worthy both of reprehension and of punishment do you regard the owner of them. If of two men you felt it necessary to be greatly more on your guard in an act of negotiation against the one than the other, because the first if you be not on your utmost vigilance will be greatly more sure to deceive and to defraud you than the second—this greater sureness, arising of course from the greater strength of his sordid and selfish appetencies, will, instead of palliating, just fasten the taint of a greater delinquency on his character. And this is true of the good as well as of the evil propensities of our nature. The God, for example, who cannot lie—whose very omnipotence is thus limited by the force of a moral necessity—who could certainly lie if He would; but with whom, from the very revoltings of His holy and righteous nature against all that is evil, it is impossible that He would—We say of this necessity, that it enhances the worth of His character, and enthrones Him in the higher reverence of all His worshippers. And it is just so with any one of our fellows, who, if so constituted as to lay upon him a moral necessity to be righteous, which he felt to be invincible—would be all the more good and estimable in our eyes. Let such be his inward mechanism, that he could not find it in his heart to do an act of cruelty or unkindness to anything that breathes; or such the strength of his antipathies to all that is perfidious or base, that he would rather die than be dishonourable; or such his unswerving fidelity to every utterance which falls from him, that you may count with as great certainty on the fulfilment of all his promises as you would on any predicted eclipse in the firmament of heaven; or, in a word, let such be his unfaltering adherence to rectitude in the midst of strongest temptations, that you might reckon on his constancy to truth and to virtue with as firm an assurance as you would on the constancy of Nature—why, my brethren, all these are so many necessities, and yet they are necessities which, so far from annihilating the moral characteristics of him who is their subject, only serve the more to enhance and to illustrate them; and they do prove, that while there is a necessity, which, acting on the muscles of the outer man, would sweep away the distinction between good and evil—there is another necessity which, acting on the motives of the inner man, would but shed a brighter moral exaltation over the one, and put a stigma on the other of a deeper moral debasement: And, so far from nullifying the difference between them, would aggravate the characteristics of both.

LECTURE LXXIII.

ROMANS IX. 11, 13-24.

"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth) .... As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

WITHIN the circle of the preceding remarks there lies enough for the guidance of man's conduct in time, though not enough for scanning the counsels of God in eternity. The high doctrine of predestination leaves all the scope which they ever had to the active and moral principles of our nature, and just as notwithstanding that great planetary movement of our world, in the tremendous velocity of which man it might be fancied would be hurled off its platform, yet can he walk his earthly rounds with as great security as if all were at rest—so, amid the lofty and comprehensive movements of the great spiritual economy, man has a definite and prescribed path, in which it is simply his business to move forward; and, let the past decrees or the coming destinies which begin and which end the mighty cycle of Heaven's administration be what they may, it is our part, if we but knew the place which belongs to us—it is our part to work, and to watch, and to strive, and to pray, and to go through the whole work and warfare of practical Christianity just as before.

This should be enough for one who is simply bent on the attainment of his salvation, though not enough to satisfy the proud and restless spirit of soaring, adventurous, and speculative man—who, not content with knowing all that belongs unto himself, would lift up the inquiries of his mind to matters that are greatly too high for it, and seize, as if within the lawful domain of his intellect, on all that belongs unto God. It is precisely at this point, we think, that the real difficulties of the question begin; and they are just such difficulties as it is our wisdom not to brave but to retire from. This is the very point at which the apostle repels the question which he is either not willing, or more likely not able, even with all his apostolical endowments, to resolve—'Thou wilt say then, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?' You will observe that in these words there is an arraignment of God, and a call or a challenge for His vindication. The part which belongs to man, when plied as he is most urgently and most affectionately by the offers of the gospel, is abundantly clear. But in point of fact some do accept these offers, while others turn away from them; and when this difference between the one and the other is traced to the power and predestination of God, this brings the high policy of the Eternal into view, and the reasons of that policy are not so clear. Were the question never stirred as to the part which God has in the matter, there might be nought to embarrass or disturb us—for all is simple and shining as the light of day about the part which man has in the matter. Could we only prevail on him to bestow all his intensity on the things which properly belong unto himself, and which himself has personally to do with, all would be plain and practical; and the great work of salvation would go on most prosperously. But he will be meddling with the things which belong unto God; and thus it is that a theology floundering beyond her depths, and compassed about with difficulties through which she cannot make her way, gives forth her hard sentences and her cabalistic sayings, when she might be otherwise and far better employed in lifting the direct and the urgent and withal the clearly intelligible calls of the gospel. It is when in the act of plying these calls that the minister of the New Testament stands upon his vantage-ground. It is when charged with the overtures of forgiveness to guilty men, he, in the name of a beseeching God, presses the acceptance of them upon every creature who is within the reach of his voice. It is when, in the discharge of his ample and unexcepted commission to all who are sitting and listening around him, he invites each and forbids none to cast their confidence on the great propitiation, and then it is impossible they can perish. It is when on the strength of this precious declaration—that whosoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out—he both sends the invitation abroad among the multitude and brings it specifically home, and with all the power of his tender and most earnest solicitations, to the heart of each individual. With him there is no distinction between the elect and the reprobate, for he knocks at every door; and while it is most true that some do welcome, and others do most obstinately and impregnably withstand him, yet his business is to address a free gospel unto all, and to lift, in the hearing of all, the assurance that, for each and for every of our species, there is an open mediatorial gate to that mercy-seat where God waiteth to be gracious. Again, we may be asked to explain this wondrous diversity of influence among men, and why it is that some do reject and others do receive these tidings of salvation? Our answer roundly and absolutely is, that we do not know. But this we know, that the way to lessen the number of those who shall reject, and to add to the number of those who shall receive, is just to ply these tidings as heretofore in the hearing of all and for the behoof of all. It is most true that God has the power over human hearts to turn them whithersoever He will; and if it be demanded—Why then do not all the hearts of men receive that touch from the hands of His omnipotence which might turn them into the way of life? our reply is still, that we cannot say. But this we are empowered to say, that there is not a hard-hearted sinner amongst you who is not within the scope of the invitation, Come ye also and be saved; and to your prayers for the clean heart and the right spirit, a softening and a sanctifying influence will be made to descend upon you. For aught we know, our world might have never fallen, or, after having fallen, a voice might have gone forth again from heaven, armed with a force and an efficacy of grace, to recall every individual of its strayed and alienated family; and if again the question be reiterated—Why is it not so with the world we occupy? again it is our answer, that we cannot tell: But this we can truly tell, that not an individual is here present who has not the word and the warrant from Heaven's high throne, to believe in Christ that he might be saved. That thing may be conceived, whereof we have the woful evidence that it has not been realized—even a sinless universe, whose every sun lighted up the habitations of unspotted holiness, and whose every planet was proof against the inroads of every ruthless destroyer; and if called upon to vindicate either the entry or the continuance of moral evil, we sink under the burden of the deep and the hopeless mystery, and feel it to be impracticable; but of this we can assure you, even a plain and a practicable way of escape for ourselves, both from the tyranny of evil and from the terrors of that vengeance which is due to it. And oh! if we but stopped at the place where apostles stood silent and solemnized, and did reverently stop before us—if, forbearing a scrutiny into the counsels of Heaven, we simply betook ourselves to that bidden walk upon earth which will at length conduct us both to the light and love of its unclouded habitations—if, waiting and working at our allotted task here below, we would but suspend that judgment, which we can neither pluck from the recesses of the eternity that is past, nor from the yet unexplored distances of the eternity before us—in a word, if instead of speculating we were humble enough to submit, and instead of dogmatizing were teachable enough and obedient enough to do,—this were the way for arriving at the resolution of all difficulties; and we should at length, when the mystery of God was finished, emerge into that region of purest transparency where we shall know even as we are known.

Peter says of Paul in one of his epistles, "And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

We doubt not that in the reference which the one apostle makes to the writings of the other, he in the first instance had in his eye that passage in the second chapter of Romans, where Paul says, "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." But we have as little doubt, that he, in the second instance, had in his eye some of those very things which now engage our attention in this ninth chapter of the Romans; and more especially that passage which forms a most remarkable counterpart to the one last quoted, and where the long-suffering, instead of being related as it is by Peter to the salvation of sinners, seems as if related by Paul to their destruction—"What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

We shall go over a few of the verses of this chapter, and lay aside that in them which is hard to be understood from that which is otherwise. It will be uniformly found, that all that is difficult attaches to those prior steps which belong to the part wherewith God had to do, before that man's part fell to be performed—leaving as clear and as comprehensible as before, both the part which man has to do, and also those posterior steps of the divine administration which follow on the part which we shall have taken in the world. Or, in other words, if there be not enough of revelation to appease the restless curiosity of man that would pry into the concerns of God, there is enough to enlighten his conscience and to guide his hopes in everything which relates to his own proper and personal concerns.

In the eleventh verse then, we cannot refuse the statement that God had, before the birth of Jacob and Esau, an anterior purpose respecting their destinations; and that the actual and historical difference which afterwards took place between the two, was the effect of that purpose. Of this election on the part of God I can give no account; I submit to be informed of the fact, but I am utterly in the dark as to the reason of it. I have to remark, however, that although this purpose according to election is not of works but of Him that calleth—although the purpose of the divine mind was the primary, the originating cause of the favour shown to Israel, yet it followeth not that works on the part of those whom He does favour are not indispensable. You would say of a stream of water that issued first from a fountain-head, and then was collected into a reservoir or second fountain whence it flowed anew, you would say that though it came through the lower fountain, it came from or of the higher. And so of this high predestination on the part of God. All that regards either our history in time, or our final condition in eternity, may originate there; and yet it may be true, that we cannot pass onward to glory in heaven, without passing through a course of personal righteousness upon earth. The primary will of God may be the aboriginal fountain of all the blessings which the children of life are to enjoy; and yet there may be a secondary fountain derived therefrom—even a fountain of grace struck out in the heart of man, and whence all the virtues of moral worth and of spiritual excellence overflow upon his history. It is thus that we can harmonize the doctrine of an absolute preordination on the part of God, with the indispensable necessity of a conditional obedience on the part of man, —so that while we admit the one as true on the strength of the passage now before us, we can, in perfect consistency therewith, admit to be true, and on the strength of other passages, that without holiness no man can see God—that all shall receive according to their works—that those who are predestinated unto life eternal are predestinated to be conformed beforehand unto the image of Christ, so that they shall not be ushered into the place of His exaltation, without being first adorned by the virtues of His example—and lastly, which describes the successive steps of this process, that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." So that though God's primary decree is not of works, it is at least to works—insomuch that even among the children of the predestined Israel, the rewards and the preferments of eternity follow in the train of good works; and among the children of reprobate Esau, the disgrace and the wretchedness of their irretrievable condemnation follow in the train of their evil works. In the thirteenth verse we have a quotation from Malachi, where the love and the hatred might not be the feelings on the part of the Godhead which prompted Him to His respective acts of election, but the feelings wherewith He regarded the respective characters of the good and the evil—not the prior affection which caused the difference; but the posterior affection of a Being of whom we distinctly know that He loveth righteousness, and as distinctly know that He hateth iniquity.

The posterior affection is all that we have to go by for indicating the moral character of God. The prior one is hidden in a depth that is behind us, and is to us unfathomable. On this point we can say no more than the apostle has done before us.

He can but assert, for he makes no attempt to argue, that God may without injustice thus affix His distinctions beforehand on the creatures whom He calls into existence. He gives us only assertion for this in the fourteenth verse, and no more than the bare assumption of a sovereignty for God in the fifteenth verse. It is true that in the sixteenth verse he makes a statement which admits of being qualified in the very same way with the previous statement, that the purpose of God according to election is not of works. In like manner as the predestination on the part of God should be dated before the performances or the works of righteousness on the part of man, and yet these works are indispensable—so the predestinating mercy of God should be dated before the willing and the running of man, and yet this willing and this running are indispensable. The way in which this prior will of God goes forth and takes effect upon us, is to set us a-willing. The way in which this prior work of grace by God goeth forth and taketh effect upon us, is to set us a-working. He works in us, not to supersede, but to stimulate our working for ourselves. He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. And He does so by the efficacy which He gives to those familiar and every-day instruments which are within the reach of man. He does so by the moral urgency of Bibles, and pulpits, and zealous messengers of salvation, and Christian parents labouring for the immortality of their children, and bringing the truths and the lessons of revelation to bear upon their consciences —so that, while behind the curtain of our visible world there is a predestinating God, the movements of whose finger we can neither trace nor account for, yet before that curtain there is a scene of movements, which correspond to those that lie veiled from observation on the other side, and which being on this side are palpably before our eyes; and what we behold of all those destined heirs of immortality is, that they are striving to enter through the gate which leads to it—and working out their own salvation—and so willing and running as that they may obtain —and putting forth all the activities of their nature in quest of a blissful eternity—and carrying their point only by urging onward with an intensity of effort which our Saviour Himself has characterized by the epithet of violence—insomuch that He hath told us how, under that economy which He hath instituted, 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'

I cannot bid you too often, my brethren, distinguish between the anterior part of this process which belonged to God, and the present or the posterior parts which belong to man—between those secret footsteps of the Almighty which preceded the ushering of His creatures into the theatre of their actual existence, and the parts which, now that they have been introduced upon the theatre, they are called upon to perform. The darkness of thickest midnight may rest upon the one quarter of contemplation, while the other is lighted up by the blaze of noon-day effulgence. The question of what man ought to do, may be met by the promptest and the plainest deliverance. The question of what God has done amid the counsels and the measures of His past eternity, or what He is now doing behind that impenetrable mantle which lies on the hidden part of His ways—this question may be one of deepest and most hopeless obscurity. I may know the present counsel which should be given to my fellows. I know not the past counsels of the profound, the predestinating Deity. This is a reflection that falls with overwhelming force on the perusal of the two following verses, and with mightiest emphasis of all when we come to the last clause of them. To the demand for a vindication of God's proceeding in this matter, I can only reply with the apostle in the three following verses; but while professing all the impotence of a child when viewing God's part of the question, I cannot look to man's part of it without such distinct and decisive feelings, as I am sure will be sympathized with by all who hear me. It was the part which a haughty tyrant had taken against the liberties of a captive and subjugated people, whose piteous moanings had now reached unto heaven, and the blood of whose slaughtered little ones cried aloud for vengeance. But ere the stroke of vengeance should fall, the voice of warning was sent unto him; and repeated miracles were wrought before his eyes; and demonstrations were given of a power that was long brandished over his head, before it came down upon him with the fell swoop of a final and irreversible destruction; and at each of the ten successive plagues, there were space and opportunity given for repentance; and if he would but have been righteous and redressed the wrongs of a sorely outraged and oppressed nation, neither would the angel of death have put forth his hand upon the families of Egypt, nor Pharaoh and his mighty hosts have been overwhelmed in the Red Sea. But after every new chastisement did he gather into a stiffer and a prouder attitude than before; and cast the judgments of Israel's God and the remonstrances of Israel's patriarchs alike away from him ; and in despite of that sore and bitter cry which reached to his inner chamber from all the weeping families of a people to whom his own had owed their preservation, did he send forth from his despot throne the mandates of a still more reckless and relentless cruelty—aggravating a bondage that was already intolerable, and trampling more fiercely and scornfully than ever on the trembling victims of his wrath. We again say, that we are not able positively to pronounce on the movements of that secret but supreme Power, in whose hands the whole power of Egypt's monarchy was but an instrument for the accomplishment of higher purposes; but looking to him who filled that monarchy, we instantly and decisively pronounce upon the doom that rightfully belonged to him ; nor, while the heart of man remaineth as it is, can he keep it from revolting against this false and unfeeling oppressor, or from rejoicing in the destiny which hurled him from his throne. And should, in this world's latter day, the scene be acted over again, between the struggles of a patriot nation and the stern resolves of a lordly and barbaric despotism—neither what is told, and authoritatively told, of the mysteries of a predestinating God, nor what is reasoned, and irrefragably reasoned, of the metaphysics of an unveering necessity, shall ever overbear the judgment or the sensibilities of our moral nature ; but, in spite of ourselves, should the spectacle again be offered of a triumphant people and a tyrant overthrown—still, as heretofore, should we feel it to be a retribution of Heaven's high justice upon the one; and still unite with the other in their lofty acclaims of gratitude, loud as from the hosts of Israel when the horses and the chariots of Pharaoh were cast into the sea, and joyful as the song of Moses over his now liberated nation.

LECTURE LXXIV.

ROMANS IX. 19-24.

"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

But before entering upon the affirmation of Peter, we again recommend your attentive comparison of the two passages in Paul—in the one of which the part which God has in the processes, either of man's ruin or of his recovery, is adverted to by the apostle; and in the other of which the part is adverted to that man himself has in these processes. The first passage is in Romans ix. 22-24: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" The second in Romans ii. 4-11: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." You will observe that what the inspired writer says of God's anterior processes regarding the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy, is in the form of a query and not of an express deliverance. This is not a subject on which he lays himself out for the satisfaction of his readers, and so it remains an unrevealed mystery. But what is of chief because of practical importance to us is, that they, of whom it is said in the ninth chapter, that the long-suffering of God will terminate in their destruction, are only those who in the language of the second chapter shall be found to have despised that long-suffering—that they who are called vessels of wrath, and whom God is said to have hardened in the obscure passage, are they who in the clear passage are said after their own hardness and impenitent heart to treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God—that while in the one God is represented as preparing aforehand unto glory, yet in the other He is represented as rendering to every man according to his deeds—that while in the one he is set before us as calling Jews or Gentiles of His own past ordination, yet this must be in harmony with that which is our present concern, even that God giveth eternal life to those who have observed a patient continuance in well-doing; and tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil, whether Jew or Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God. And thus again, while a hopeless and as yet impracticable obscurity sits on God's part, there is none whatever which sitteth upon ours. We do not know why He may have selected us as the individuals in whom He worketh to will and to do; but we do know what is incumbent on us, which is to work out our own salvation. We do not know why any individuals ever come into contact with the first influences of that hardening process which shall terminate in their destruction; but we know it to be the pressing, and we shall add the practicable duty of all individuals, to harden not their own hearts—and that if any individual here present shall but awaken unto a concern for his own soul, and betake himself in good earnest to the perusal of the Bible and to prayer, God is in readiness to descend with an influence that shall soften and shall save him, saying unto one and all—"Turn unto me, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you."

This brings me to the utterance of Peter, "That the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation"—not willing, as he says some verses before, that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. We are aware of the distinction made by theologians between the secret and the revealed will of God; and the only use we should like to make of it is this, that whatever is secret belongs unto Him, and we have nothing to do with it —whatever is revealed belongs unto us, and with that we have to do. What God's past ordinations are in regard to us we do not know. Paul singles out no individuals. He treats the doctrine generally, and even then bids adieu to it with a question which he leaves unsolved; and so let us leave it. What God's present attitude is in regard to us we do know; for Peter, instead of guessing at it by a question, tells us of it by an affirmation the most distinct and decisive—and not only so, but bids us beware of suffering aught that has been said by Paul to defeat or to do away the expression of it. Our wisdom is to forbear the question, and to proceed upon the affirmation; to imitate the one apostle in his speculative reserve, and to take from the other apostle the impress of his practical earnestness—assured, that however impenetrable the haze may be which hangs over the pathway of God from His first decrees to the present moment of our history, there is now a clear pathway for man, and on which God Himself invites one and all of you to enter. He has suffered you so long, that He might still ply you with the offers of a free salvation. He did not cut you down yesterday, that this day you might be met by at least one call more, and have another opportunity of making good your reconciliation, and be again told of the open door of Christ's mediatorship —and that deep as is the crimson dye of your manifold iniquities, and provoking as the indifference has been of your past feelings to that gospel which has so oft been sounded in your hearing and sounded in vain,—yet this one day more if you will but hear His voice, are we empowered to say to each and to every that God is still willing and still waiting to be gracious.

And there is one way in which you might turn to plain and practical account the doctrine of God's agency. You may propitiate it by your obedience. You may obtain it by your prayers. Instead of probing into the mystery of God hardening the heart of Pharaoh, know that there is one way in which you may realize a hardening process upon your own heart—even by your resistance of our present call. That will harden you the more against the impression of every future call. Or, instead of waiting for a special and a sanctifying operation upon your own soul, know that there is a way by which you may work for it. Give all your present strength to the doing of God's will, and ask for more. Think not that the way of your salvation is one of hidden and impracticable mystery. It is indeed a plain and a practicable way, and the way that we now want to reduce you to. Never was there a more distinct and open path laid down by any sovereign for the return of his offending subjects, than the Sovereign of heaven and earth has laid down for us His apostate creatures. He offers you forgiveness through the blood of Christ, He promises you strength and sanctification through the influences of His own free Spirit. He tells you what the new obedience of the gospel is. And He bids you enter on that obedience, trusting in the Lord and doing good continually. To incite your earnestness, He addresses Himself to the various feelings and principles of your nature—at one time moving your fears by His report of the coming vengeance, and at another your desires and your hopes by His representation of heaven and its unfading glories. And, to crown all, He stretches out even now to the guiltiest of you all the hand of a purchased and a proffered reconciliation—declaring that if you will only come over from sin unto the Saviour, He will be forthwith a Father unto you, your guide in time, your guarantee for an inheritance in eternity. Surely the God who is doing all this is wiping His hands of you. Your blood will be upon your own heads; and He, clear when He speaketh and justified when He judgeth, when He says—What more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done for it—will leave you without a speech and without an argument.

This doctrine of predestination ought never to be a stumbling-block in the way of your entertaining the overtures of the gospel. Leave it to God Himself to harmonize those everlasting decrees by which He hath distinguished between the elect and the reprobate, with His present declarations of good-will to one and to all of the human family. Your business is to let the decrees alone, and to cast your joyful confidence upon the declarations. Should an earthly monarch send a message of friendship to your door, must you reject it either as unintelligible or unreal because you have not been instructed in all the mysteries of his government? Because you cannot comprehend the policy of his empire, must you therefore not receive the offered kindness which had come from him to your own dwelling-place? And ere you can appreciate the gift which he holds out for your single and specific acceptance, must you first be able to trace all the workings and all the ways of the vast, the varied superintendence which belongs to him? It is truly so with God, who, although presiding over a management which embraces all worlds and reaches from everlasting to everlasting, has nevertheless sent to each individual amongst us the special intimation of His perfect willingness to admit us into favour; and must we, I ask, suspend our comfort and our confidence therein, till we the occupiers of one of the humblest tenements in creation and the creatures but of yesterday, till we shall have mastered the economy of this wondrous universe and scanned the counsels of eternity?

Although I have expatiated at such length upon this subject, it was not for the purpose of schooling you into the doctrine of predestination—for, while we deem it to be true in itself, we deem it not to be a truth the belief of which is essential to salvation. It was not even in the hope that our argument in its favour should be understood by all; nor do we hold such an understanding to be at all indispensable. Far less was it in the presumptuous imagination, that I could vindicate all the ways of God to man—for small indeed is that part of His ways to which we have access. But it was solely with the view to urge upon you, that, whatever obscurity was cast by this high doctrine on the ways of God to man, the ways of man to God were not altered, and should not at all be obscured by it, but rather that the hopes and the obligations and the whole business of your practical Christianity, are left by it on the same familiar footing as before; and that with the view of averting a great mischief incurred by those 'unstable and unlearned' who wrest this scripture, even as they do the others, to their own destruction. You may not even understand how it is that God's predestination affects not your practice, but be assured that so it is; and grievous indeed will be your condemnation, if one principle about which you are confessedly in the dark shall be found to have bewildered you away from the light of those other principles which are clear and conspicuous, and by proceeding with honesty and in good earnest upon which it is that you are saved. We can truly own that we entered upon this subject with reluctance, and only because it stood in our way. We now leave it without regret, unwilling to say more, and yet feeling that we could scarcely have said less—though, after all, there is perhaps a remaining obscurity essentially inherent in the subject, and which no explanation can do away.

But let me hope that a time is coming when many here present shall fondly and with felt advantage recur to it—even when, after having laboured with all diligence, and being compassed about with all the virtues of heaven, they shall attain the assurance therefrom that heaven is their destined habitation. Then indeed may the doctrine be contemplated both with safety and with profit by aged and advanced Christians, when they reflect on all that way by which they have been led, and recognise in it the grace and providence of a God who has so evidently spiritualized them—when they shall adopt the language of the apostle, that it is by the grace of God I am what I am; and when, to the comfort and the gratitude which such a reflection is fitted to inspire, they shall add the humility of this other sentiment, It is God alone who hath made us to differ, and we have nothing that we did not receive.

Ver. 24.—'Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.'

I recur to this verse for the purpose of noticing a distinction of sentiment between two classes of theologians on that subject which has recently engrossed us—the first of whom would extend the doctrine of predestination to individuals, and make the final and everlasting condition of each single man the subject of an absolute and rigorous decree from all eternity; and the second of whom, revolted by what they feel to be the utter harshness of such a representation, would at the same time yield so far to the authority of Scripture as to advocate a certain application of this doctrine to whole nations or collective bodies of men. That is—they will allow, not of certain individuals being predestined to life eternal in heaven to the exclusion of all others; but they will allow of certain nations being predestined to the light of Christianity upon earth, while others are left in the darkness of superstition or of paganism. They cannot refuse, for example, that the call of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews were both of them matters of prophecy and of predestination in the counsels of heaven. But this they contend for as the whole length to which the doctrine of God's fixed and irreversible decrees ought to be carried—arguing, in fact, that the only purpose of the apostle was to vindicate the great national movement which the true religion made in his day away from his people and onward to the other countries and people of the world. They hold the doctrine to be tolerable thus far, and chiefly because it does not infringe on the warrant of each individual man to embrace the gospel in those places where the gospel is proclaimed; and appears to leave untouched all the practical influences by which men are led to choose, and to resolve, and to endeavour, and to strive, and to put forth all the activities of their nature in the business both of willing and of working out their own salvation.

We have already laboured to assure you, that the most staunch and sturdy advocates of a predestination which reaches even to individuals would contend as earnestly as others for the unexcepted range of the gospel call, and for the freest and widest scope to all the activities of gospel obedience. And we further concede the great object of the apostle, throughout the whole argumentation of this chapter, to have been just to establish a national predestination; and that with the purpose of justifying the transference which was about to be made of the true religion from Jews to Gentiles. Nevertheless, he, in the course of his argument, unfolds to us the power or the predestination of God as extending to individuals also—to the good destinies of Isaac and Jacob on the one hand—to the evil destinies of Ishmael and Esau and Pharaoh upon the other. The truth is, it is by an influence upon the hearts and the histories of individuals that He gives a direction to the fortune and to the history of nations; and again—on the state of a nation may turn both the present character and the future, nay, eternal condition of each individual belonging to it. They who admit of a predestination in regard to the larger historical movements of this world's kingdoms cannot escape from the necessity of this predestination having an influence upon individuals and upon families. More especially upon the light of the gospel having been predestined for any nation, may there depend the eternal life of every separate man in that nation who shall have embraced the gospel. But we now bid our final adieu to the general argument; and we should like to do it in the very spirit wherewith our Saviour met the speculative question of that inquirer who asked Him, if there were many that should be saved? He was bidden to recall his attention from this wide and general survey, and simply look to himself, and labour for his own salvation. The reply was—Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. And so, my brethren, would I have you to turn yourselves from the general survey of God's arrangements to a personal search and application of your own case and interest therein.

He has at least introduced the light of the gospel to that country in which you dwell. He has at least visited you with Christian Sabbaths and Christian opportunities. The effect of His having so selected and signalized our nation is, that He has selected and signalized each individual amongst you by a pointed, a personal offer of reconciliation. This is the matter that concerns you; and could we only prevail upon you duly to entertain this matter, we should hold it a far higher achievement than to furnish you with all the arguments, and exhibit even to your full conviction all the parts and proportions of our systematic theology. We tell you of God's beseeching voice. We assure you, in His name, that He wants you not to die. We bid you venture for pardon on the atonement made by Him who died for all men. We bid you apply forthwith to the Spirit of all grace and holiness, that you may be qualified to enter into that beatific heaven from whose battlements there wave the signals of welcome, and whose gates are widely open to receive you. We would bring this plain word of salvation nigh unto every conscience, and knock with it at the door of every heart; and commissioned as we are to preach the gospel not to a chosen few, while we keep it back from the hosts of the reprobate, but to preach it to every creature under heaven, we again entreat that none here present shall forbid themselves—for most assuredly God hath not forbidden them. But come unto Christ all of you who labour and are heavy-laden, and ye shall have rest. Look unto Him, all ye ends of the earth; and though now placed at the farthest outskirts of a moral distance and alienation, even look unto Him and ye shall be saved.

LECTURE LXXV.

ROMANS IX. 25-33.

"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

VER. 25.—'As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.'

The apostle, with his usual skill and dexterity of argument, addressed himself as a Jew to the Jews; and so brings their own Scriptures to bear upon them. He first quotes a prophecy from Hosea regarding the Gentiles; and of whom it is most distinctly stated that they were to be admitted to the same favour by which the children of Israel had been specialized, and from which themselves had heretofore been outcasts. He thus takes shelter under the old and venerable authorities, which the very people against whom he contended held in equal reverence with himself, and proves that it is no new idea—this extension of the family of God, in such a way that other nations might enter into the same close relationship with Him of His people, which had hitherto been confined to the descendants of Israel.

Ver. 26.—'And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God.'

This verse seems necessary for describing the precise manner in which the extension was to take place. It had been no unwonted thing for Gentiles to become proselytes; but still the land they occupied was regarded as an outcast region of heathenism, and they looked to Judea as the Holy Land—to Jerusalem as the priestly and the consecrated place whereunto they looked as the great metropolis of religion, and whither many of them repaired every year to join in the solemn services of the temple. It was not in this sense however that the coming enlargement was to be brought about. In the language of our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, the hour was at hand when neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem the Father was to be worshipped. Even the local affinity between the true religion and the country or the cities of the people of Israel was forthwith to be dissolved; and in every nation he that feared God and worked righteousness was to be accepted of Him. Still proselytes from every nation under heaven came to Jerusalem at the time of their great festival; but now, without any such annual migration, a priesthood and a religious service and an acceptable worship were to be established in the very seats of idolatry. '*In the place* where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, *there* shall they be called the children of the living God.'

Ver. 27.—'Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.'

The prophecy of Hosea respected the Gentiles, and is quoted for the purpose of reconciling the children of Israel to their participation in what had been hitherto the distinguishing privileges of but one people. The prophecy of Isaiah respects Israel itself, and is quoted for the purpose of showing, and from the mouth of their greatest prophet, that, although God had uttered promises in behalf of a seed numerous as the sand of the sea-shore, yet that He regarded not these promises as broken, although they were made good only to a remnant of them. That prophecy referred, in the first instance, to a fell destruction which came on the children of Israel, and reduced them to but a remnant—proving it to be no strange thing in God to have abandoned to their ruin a vast majority of the children of Abraham, even notwithstanding the word of promise which He had made to the patriarch; and therefore that this promise would be as little falsified now as it was then, although the great bulk of the nation should be reft of the divine favour, and but a small fraction of them should remain in that favour by embracing

Christianity. 'Esaias also crieth concerning them, Though the number, the predicted and promised number to Abraham, of descendants who should spring from him, was that they should be as the sand of the sea, yet but a remnant shall be saved.'

Ver. 28.—'For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.'

This alludes to the work of vengeance, which in His righteous indignation was executed upon the children of Israel; and that by a sudden and overwhelming invasion of their enemies. The same work was speedily to be done over again by the forces of the Roman empire; and, in like manner, as the truth of God's promise to Abraham stood unimpeachable and firm because of the remnant that survived the sweeping destruction of these former days—so the impending destruction of the latter days would also leave a remnant which should vindicate the word of God from the charge of having taken none effect.

Ver. 29.—'And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.'

The Lord of Sabaoth signifies the Lord of Hosts. Had he left no remnant, had He made a clean and total destruction of Israel, then it would have shared in the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah —cities of which no vestige is now to be found, and of whose people the descendants are altogether lost in the history of our species. It is not so with the Jews. A goodly number of them were obedient unto the faith, and in them all the blessings promised to Abraham had their richest accomplishment. Even those who stood obstinately out in their rejection of the Saviour were not all cut off; and their posterity maintain a separate and a monumental character to this very day—at once affording a most impressive evidence of that special part which the Divinity takes in their affairs, and forming a reserve, as it were, for the fulfilment of such a restoration upon them as shall pour a lustre on all the prophecies which have been delivered in their behalf, and make it obvious, that, after the many dark reverses and humiliations which this singular people have undergone, that, after all, there is not a promise which has been uttered to their patriarchs of old which has not obtained a splendid verification in the subsequent history of the race.

Ver. 30.—'What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.'

It might well disarm predestination of all its terrors, when we look to the way in which its fulfilments are practically brought about. There is the offer of a justifying righteousness made unto all, and they who accept, as the Gentiles in the present instance, are the objects of a blessed predestination. The reprobate are they who decline that offer. However tremendous it may look when viewed by us from afar, among the sublime and mysterious altitudes of that past eternity where be the primary links of a vast progression reaching from the decrees of the unsearchable God to the yet unrevealed destinies of all His creatures—certain it is that God, when, instead of being contemplated in His place at the commencement of this chain where He stands at so lofty and incomprehensible a distance away from us, is contemplated in the place He occupies at the present and the contiguous links, appears to us under a very different aspect from that in which our imagination arrays Him when we cast our regards athwart the boundless interval of those ages which are past. And whether is it better, we ask, to take our impressions of the Divinity in the act of looking to Him as God at a distance, or in the act of listening to Him as a God who is at hand? Whatever He may have purposed or done then, when creation and all its issues were fixed by an act of preordination that reached forward unto all and embraced all, this is what He is doing now,—He is stretching out for your acceptance the title-deeds to an inheritance of glory. He is offering to put into your hands a right of entry into the city which hath foundations. He is making the issues of *your* eternity, at least, to turn upon this — whether, accepting of Christ's righteousness as a gift, and so coming into possession of a valid plea for the honours and rewards of heaven, you shall obtain sure entrance thereinto; or, declining this offer and casting the die upon your own righteousness, you shall utterly fail of everlasting bliss. Grant that you are the objects of a blessed predestination, here is the way in which you make it good—even by accepting through faith the righteousness of Christ as your meritorious plea of acceptance with God. Grant that any of you shall turn out to have been the objects of dire reprobation, this will not be without your refusal of an offer complied with by others, but made also unto you—made without reserve and without exception unto all. Let me then once more entreat you to forego the distant and to take up with the near contemplation. Attend not to God's past decrees, but to God's present dealings with you—not to what He has written *of* you in that book of His secret counsels which is up in heaven, but to what He has written *to* you in that book of His open declarations which is now circulating freely on earth, and on a copy of which each may lay his hand. In the language of the next chapter, try not to pluck the secret of your destiny from heaven above, or from the recesses of that eternity which is behind—try not to fetch it into the light of day from the profundity that is under your feet, or from the yet untravelled depths of that eternity which is before; but take all your direction, and the guidance of every footstep, from the word which is nigh unto you. There you read of God's beseeching voice, of His protestations, nay, of His very oaths, that in your death He has no pleasure—of this proclamation, the sound whereof reaches from the mercy-seat to the farthest outskirts of His sinful family, even that "whosoever calleth upon the name of His Son shall be saved." And if, on looking across the medium of that endless retrospect where clouds and darkness at last terminate the vision, you could descry nought to cheer you into confidence, learn now to regard the present attitude, and hearken to the present accents of a God—all whose thoughts to those who seek after Him are thoughts of graciousness, and who now holds Himself forth unto all as a God benign and placable and tender.

It is said of the Gentiles that they followed not after righteousness and yet obtained it. The righteousness of that law which was written in the books of Moses they were generally ignorant of. The righteousness of that law which was written in their own hearts they knew but they did not follow; but there was a righteousness followed after, even till it was finished, by Christ Jesus as the substitute of sinners. This was declared to them as a righteousness in which they might appear with acceptance before God—a declaration believed by many; and according to their belief so it was done unto them.

Ver. 31.—'But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.'

The law of righteousness here is the same with the righteousness of the law. They strove by their obedience to its precepts after a right to its rewards. It was not with a view of simply adorning their character by the graces or virtues of the law, nor was it from the impulse of a love for its righteousness that they so laboured. It was with the view of making good that condition, on which they conceived that the reward was suspended—after which they could challenge that reward as their due; as a thing that they had as much won as either the wages for which they had served, or the goods for which they had paid down the purchase-money. This was that after which they laboured, and this they fell short of. Their obedience did not come up to the high requisitions of the law, and so they missed its reward. On the contrary, their disobedience, both in transgressing and in coming short—their sins, both of commission and of omission, brought them under its clear and decisive condemnation. They may have fulfilled in some things, but they failed in many things; and though toiling with all the strenuousness of men whose eternity was at issue, none could overtake the whole length and breadth of its commandments.

Now observe the precise effect of this state of matters. However willing God might be that all these transgressors should be admitted into heaven—yet this admittance of them might not be possible, so long as they on the other hand were not willing to be admitted there save on the footing of a remuneration for their obedience. There might be enough of the disposition of kindness on the part of God to bestow heaven upon them as a gift; but there might be a disposition on the part of men to decline it in this character, and to demand it as the term of a contract which they challenge the other party to fulfil. This brings the parties to a stand, and it is no light matter which they stand for. It is for a high principle of divine jurisprudence, of which we are taught in the Bible that there is a moral impossibility that it should be violated. Upon the difference between heaven as a thing of free grace to the sinner, or heaven as a thing of due and merited return to him for his obedience as it is, there just turns the difference between a vindicated and a dishonoured law. This difference, man, obtuse and deadened as he is in all the sensibilities of his moral nature, may feel to be a slight one; but it was not so felt among the pure and ethereal intelligences of the upper sanctuary. The angels who are there saw the dilemma, and looked on with most intense earnestness to the evolutions of that great problem by which it might be extricated. It was a question of pure and lofty jurisprudence; and, however shadowy it may appear to beings of our grosser faculties, and withal darkened and made dull in all our perceptions of what is due to Heaven's high sacredness, by the blight which sin has cast upon them—it was truly a question for which all heaven was put in motion; and on which the King who sitteth upon its throne put forth the resources and the energies of a wisdom that is infinite. And His authoritative declaration to this our rebel world is, that the sanctions of His law could not be nullified—that all creation must pass away rather than that any of its promises or any of its threatenings should fail—that the truth and justice and righteousness of the Lawgiver admitted of nothing short of the rigid execution of all its penalties—that sinners could not be admitted to His complacency till their sin had been branded with the mark of an adequate condemnation; and, more particularly, that He would not descend to any compromise with those who, instead of trembling as they ought lest the fire of an offended jealousy should go forth upon them to burn up and to destroy, persisted for their plea of acceptance in an obedience so paltry and so polluted, as being honourable enough to the law, and as every way good enough for the exalted Lawgiver.

Ver. 32.—'Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.'

This is a most important question, and a most instructive reply to it—more especially when we view it as given by the apostle newly emerged from the subject of predestination, on which he had just been arguing. All fresh as he was, my brethren, from the high topic of God's decrees, yet, on the moment that he turns himself to consider the reason why Israel fell short of the promised blessing, he lays it on the familiar topic of man's doings. The cause of their not attaining to righteousness, and so of their being excluded from life everlasting, is here resolved, not into the destinies of the Creator, but into the doings of His creatures—not into the predestination that is made by God above, but into the wrong, and the wilfully wrong direction that is taken by man below. Instead of speculating on the incomprehensible mystery of that will in heaven by which some are elected unto life, he tells us of the way upon earth which all men should take in order to arrive at it. And the reason simply why the children of Israel missed the object of a blissful eternity, at least the only reason which either they or we have to do with, is that they took the wrong way. They sought a righteousness which might justify them before God by the works of the law; and this proved a stumbling-stone at which they stumbled and fell, and that very far short indeed of the goal to which they were pressing forwards. They tried to master the requisitions of the law, in order thereby to get at its reward; and the law proved too hard for them. They chose to enter the lists with the judgment of the law, and that judgment therefore must take effect upon them. They have sped according to their own choice. They threw their stake on the commandments of the law; and, not having got the length of perfect obedience thereunto, nothing remains but that they must abide its condemnation.

Now what they did, the natural legality of the human heart prompts the men of all ages to do. Our first, our natural tendency, is to seek after a righteousness—and that by a conformity to the rule of perfect righteousness. Did we attain the righteousness, we would thereby acquire a title to the reward. But the universal fact is that none do attain; and hence, with all who persist in seeking life by the law, there is but one or other term of this alternative. They either live in the apathy of a false and an ill-founded peace, or they live in the alarm of a well-founded terror—on good terms with themselves because of their imagined adequate fulfilment of the demands of the law, or on bad terms with themselves because of their real distance and deficiency therefrom. And so they sink down into the state of mere formalists in obedience, or into the restless unconfirmed and withal most unfruitful as well as unhappy state of a perpetual fearfulness. In either state they are destitute of an availing righteousness for their acceptance with God. He will not, on the one hand—merely because men are satisfied with themselves—recognise the incomplete, the tainted offerings of their human imperfection—as if they made out a full and satisfying homage to that law, all whose demands are on the side of a personal spiritual and universal holiness. Neither, on the other hand, will He sustain the dread and the distress and the painful anxieties of those who are not satisfied with themselves, as a sufficient homage done to His law. What He wants with them further is, that they should do homage to His gospel. It is well that they have such a true discernment of God's law as clearly to perceive that no effort of theirs can reach upward to its sublime and empyreal elevation. But it is also essential that they should have such a true discernment of His grace as to perceive that, by its condescensions and by its offers, it reaches downward even to a worthlessness as humbling and as polluted as theirs. It is right that they should defer to the terror of those penalties which are denounced by the one; but it is equally right that they should defer to the truth of those promises which are held forth by the other. They ought to tremble, when bethinking them of their violations of the law; but they ought to feel reassured, and to cease from trembling, when bethinking themselves of the sufficiency of the gospel. If it be an offence to have done disobedience to the precepts of His authority, it is also an offence to have done discredit to the overtures of His good-will. And so we read of the fearful and the unbelieving, as well as of the presumptuously secure, that both alike have a place assigned to them in the abodes of condemnation.

Ver. 33.—'As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.'

Our only method of escape from this is by fleeing unto Christ, and casting a confidence upon Him which shall never be put to shame. He is represented as being to some a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. It were entering upon a subject far too wide for us at present, did we enlarge upon all the varieties of that repugnance which is felt by men towards Christ—the absolute nausea of some at the very utterance of His name—the utter distaste for all conversation regarding Him—the antipathy, nay even hatred, which rises in the bosoms of many against His peculiarly marked and devoted followers; and, along with the toleration which very generally obtains for a meagre and moderate and mitigated Christianity, the secret revolt and the open declaration against those who carry the doctrines and the demands of Christianity to what is apprehended to be a great deal too far. In a certain decent and regulated proportion, it is borne with; but it is very apt to be impatiently or indignantly flung at, when it offers to engross the whole heart, or to make too large or ostensible an inroad on the state and history of human affairs. But for a field of so much extent and latitude, we verily at present have no time; and must be content now with but one observation on a certain apparent crossness or contrariety of sentiment in the doctrines of Christ and His apostles—which has an effect rather to gravel the understanding, than to alienate the affections of men. We advert to the place which the law and the works of the law have in the theological system of the New Testament—where at one time they are set aside as utterly insignificant; and at another it seems to be represented as the very end, as the ultimate landing-place of Christianity, to make its disciples zealous and perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works. There is the semblance of a most obvious, nay very glaring inconsistency here, which does embarrass even honest inquirers, and put them at a loss for the right adjustment of this whole question. It is a question which stumbles them, which perplexes them, and has all the effect of a painful and puzzling ambiguity upon their minds. It is not too much to say that the disgrace and the disparagement which appear to be cast by the men called evangelical, on the worth and the importance and the noble character of virtue, constitute at least one of the offences, one ground of strong and sensitive aversion against the truth as it is in Jesus.

I cannot pretend at present to a full deliverance upon this subject; and shall therefore only suggest a distinction which can be stated in one sentence; and should, as far as that goes, be all the more memorable; and which, if duly pondered upon, will achieve for you, I think, the extrication of this whole difficulty. The distinction is between the legal right to heaven which obedience may be supposed to confer, and the moral rightness of obedience in itself. When the New Testament affirms the nullity of good works, it is their nullity from their not being perfect to the object of establishing our legal right to the rewards of eternity. When the New Testament affirms the value of good works, it is their value, even though not yet perfect, in regard to their moral rightness—which moral rightness brightens more and more unto perfection, till at length it passes into the sacredness of heaven, and becomes meet for the exercises and the joys of eternity. A Christian utterly renounces all good works, as having any value in them to confer a legal right to heaven; and yet a Christian devotes himself assiduously to the performance of good works, as having in them that virtue of moral rightness which is in itself the very essence of heaven. For his legal right to heaven, his whole reliance is on the obedience of Christ, as that which hath alone won and purchased it. For his personal meetness for heaven, he plies all the strength that is in him, whether by nature or by grace, in order to perfect his own obedience.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ROMANS X. 1.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

The words of this text derive a special and an augmented interest from the very position which it here occupies. You will observe that it is at the close of a very elaborate argument held by our apostle on the high topic of predestination; and from which the reader is fully warranted to imagine, that those Israelites, in whose behalf he plies Heaven with such fervent importunity, had already been the objects of Heaven's irrevocable decree. It is altogether worthy of notice, that, in this instance, the pre-ordination of the Creator did not supersede the prayers of the creature; and that he who saw the farthest into the counsels of the Divinity above, saw nothing there which should affect either the diligence or the devotions of any humble worshipper below. We believe that there are some men with loftier reach of intellect than their fellows, who can discern the harmony between these two things; or how it is that the seat of the Eternal might be assailed with prayer, on a matter regarding which the purposes of the Eternal have been unalterably fixed from the foundations of the world. They can perceive that either the prayer or the performance of man is but a step in that vast progression which connects his final destiny with the first purposes of God; and that, being as indispensable a step as any single link is to the continuity of the whole chain, it must be made sure, else we shall never arrive at the right or prosperous termination. In other words, if man will not address himself to the business of supplication, the blessing of salvation will not follow; and however indelible the characters may be in which the ultimate futurities of man are written in the book of heaven, this, it would appear, should not foreclose but rather stimulate both his prayers and his efforts upon earth. There be a few who can clearly discern the adjustments of this seeming difficulty; but, on the other hand, there are many who, should they attempt to resolve, would sink under it as a mystery more than all others hopeless and impracticable. To these we would say that they should quit the arduous speculation, and keep by the obvious duty—taking their lesson from Paul, who, though just alighted from the daring ascents which he had made among the past ordinations of the Godhead, forthwith busies himself among the plain and the present duties of the humble Christian, and so makes it palpable to the Church throughout all ages, that however deep or hard to be understood his article of predestination may be, there is nothing in it which should hinder performance, there is nothing in it which should hinder prayer.

Theology has its steeps and its altitudes—pinnacles far out of sight, or shooting upwardly to heaven till lost in the cloudy envelopment which surrounds them. Yet this does not hinder that there should be a most distinct and discernible path which winds around its basement, and by which the lowliest of Zion's travellers may find an ascending way, which, when the toils of his pilgrimage are ended, will land him at length in a place of purest transparency, where he shall know even as he is known. There are some whose vision can carry them more aloft among the heights of arduous speculation. Yet let none be discouraged—for there is a way of duty that may be practised, and of doctrine that may be understood, which is accessible to all—a way the entrance upon which requires but the union of a desirous heart with a doing hand—a union this that is often realized by the veriest babe in intellect; who wholly unable though he be to scan the awful mysteries of a predestinating God, yet can lift the prayer both of affection and confidence, while looking to Him in the more legible as well as more lovely aspect of a God that waiteth to be gracious.

Our first remark then is, that predestination should be no barrier in the way of prayer. Our second is, that unless the desire of the heart go before it, it is no prayer at all. Prayer is the utterance of desire, and without desire is bereft of all its significancy. The virtue does not lie in the articulation—but altogether in the wish which precedes, or rather which prompts it. Prayer is an act of the soul; and the bodily organ is but the instrument and not the agent of this service. The soul which thinks and wills and places its hopes or its affections on any given object—this and this alone is the agent in prayer. Insomuch that although not one word should have been framed by the lips, or emitted in language from the mouth—the man may substantially be praying. It is thus that he may pray without ceasing. In company, or in business, or in any scene whatever, whether of duty or of discipline, there may at least be a prayerful heart apart from the formalities of prayer—a supplicatory, a kneeling attitude, on the part of his inner man, and to which he is bowed down continually by an aspiring earnestness on the one hand to be and to do at all times as he ought; and by a lowly sense on the other hand of his native insufficiency and dependence on a higher power than his own, for being constantly upholden in the way of rectitude. This will be sustained as prayer by Him who weigheth the secrets of the spirit; and, on the contrary, all expression disjoined from this will be dealt with as an affronting mockery of Heaven. It is true that in the case of prayer, God has committed Himself to the amplest promises of fulfilment; and all Nature and Providence would be at our command, if the mere verbality of a petition upon our part were to bring upon God the literal obligation of these promises. But He is not pledged to the accomplishment of any prayer where the desire of the heart does not originate the utterance of the mouth. The want of such desire nullifies the prayer; and to imagine otherwise would be to revive the superstition of other days—when a religious service, instead of being held as a community of thought and spirit between the creature and the Creator, consisted in the mere handiwork of a certain and stated ceremonial. And be assured, that neither the counting of beads nor the conning of Paternosters is at all more irrational than are those devotions, whether of the closet or the sanctuary, which the heart does not emanate, or the heart does not go along with.

This remark, obvious although it be, should be urged more especially on the coming round of every great religious anniversary. Although Popery in respect of denomination may have gone conclusively forth of our borders—yet in respect of spirit and character may it still abide in the land, and be as inveterately rooted as ever in the hearts of our population. Even long after the creed of these realms has been purified of all that is erroneous in the dogmata of Roman Catholics, may the conscience be infected with a certain Catholic imagination, which in truth forms by far the most misleading heresy of the Church of Rome. It consists in the charm which is ascribed to mere handiwork, to performance separate from principle, to that bodily exercise whereof the apostle saith that without godliness, which is a thing of soul and sentiment altogether, it profiteth little. Their delusion is that it profiteth much; and we fear it is a delusion which has left deep and enduring traces behind it, even among a people who have abjured the communion of Popery, and would treat its disciples with intolerance. Under all the disguises of our Protestantism, the inveteracy of the olden spirit breaks forth at Sacraments. And when we behold of many who breathe the element of irreligion through the year, how at the proclamation of this great religious festival they come forth in families—how, although on any other Sabbath the ordinary services of the house of God should be honoured with but half a congregation or with half an attendance, yet on the Sabbath and the Service extraordinary, the place should teem to an overflow with worshippers—how an importance so visible should be given to this solemnity, and by those who have not habitually in their hearts any solemn reverence for the things or obligations of sacredness, we cannot but recognise somewhat like the dregs of our ancient superstition in this great periodical homage, founded as it often is on a sort of magical or mystic spell which is ascribed to Sacraments.

Be assured of this and of every other ordinance of Christianity, that unless impregnated with life and meaning, it is but a skeleton or framework—a body without a soul—a mere service of bone and muscle—which the hand can perform, but in which the heart with all its high functions of thought and sensibility has no share. It stands in the same relation of inferiority to genuine religion, that the drudgery of an animal does to the devotion of a seraph. This is not the service which God who is a Spirit requires of His worshippers—who, to worship Him acceptably, must do it in spirit and in truth. Religion is no doubt the homage of creatures who are immeasurably beneath the Sovereign whom they address; but still it is the homage of intelligent creatures — the homage of the subordinate to the Supreme intelligence—of beings, therefore, who look with the eye of their mind towards Him who sits in presiding authority over the universe which He has made; and who at the same time are conscious that they are looked upon with the eye of a Mind that discerns all and that judges all. In one word, if in the doing of any ordinance there be not the intercourse of mind with mind, there substantially is nothing; and yet we fear it to be just such a nothingness as is yielded by many who are regular in prayer, and who walk with decency and order through the rounds of a Sacrament. In this wretched drivelling, both superstition and hypocrisy appear to be blended —a vain confidence in the efficacy of forms, and at the same time a willing substitution of them for the purer but more arduous services of a moral and spiritual obedience. It is this last which alone availeth. Your Sacrament is vain, if the dedication of the whole life to God do not come after it. Your prayer is vain, if unlike the apostle's in the text, the desire of the whole heart have not gone before it.

But let us now attend to the subject of the prayer—even that Israel might be saved. And here we may remark that although desire be a constituent part of prayer and therefore essential both to its reality and to its acceptance—yet it is not all desire thus lifted up from earth that will meet with acceptance in heaven. It were an attempt much too unwieldy at present, though none could be more interesting, to specify what all the desires are of creatures here below which are sure of welcome and of a willing response in the sanctuary above. It is not every random desire that will meet with such a reception—for the same Scripture which holds out the promise of " ask and ye shall receive," has also held out the warning that many ask and receive not, " because they ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts." Still, believing as we do, that Scripture does furnish the principles by which to discriminate the warrantable from the unwarrantable—and so, if I may thus speak, to classify the topics of prayer—we know not any exposition of greater practical importance than what those things are which we may confidently seek at the hand of God even till we have obtained them; and what are those other things on the seeking after which the Bible lays such discouragement, that we dare not, or rather cannot though we would, pray for them in faith, or pray for them in that which gives to every request its prevalence and its power. As an example of what now I can but briefly touch upon, it is written that " if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." This does not confer a sanction upon every suit or solicitation that we may press at the court of heaven, but certainly upon a vast number of them. Thus surely, every petition in that prayer which He Himself hath dictated, even the Lord's Prayer, may, as according most thoroughly with His own will, be preferred with utmost confidence on our part; and so it is that while we have no warrant to pray for this world's riches, we have a perfect warrant to pray for daily bread. The same principle of agreeableness to the will of God sustains our faith, when praying in behalf either of ourselves or others for the riches of a glorious immortality—being expressly told that God willeth such intercessions to be made for all men, and on this ground too that He willeth all men to be saved. Such is the large and liberal warrant that we have from God Himself for turning our desire into a request, when the object of that desire is salvation. No imagined desire on the part of God, or imagined destiny on the part of man, should lay an arrest on this plain exercise. Let there be but a desire in our heart after salvation, even as there was a desire in the heart of Paul for the salvation of his countrymen the Jews; and the patent way of arriving at our object is just to vent this desire in confident utterance before the mercy-seat of Heaven;—so near does God bring salvation to us—so fully does He place it within the reach of all, and at the receiving of all. It is just as if we had it for the taking; or as if no obstacle whatever intervened between our sincere wish for it, and our secure possession of it. At least there seems, in that gracious economy under which we live, to be but one stepping-stone between them, and that is prayer; so very near and accessible to us has God made the blessedness of our eternity. He has positively committed His attribute of truth to the declaration, that if men will but ask He will bestow. He has invested, as it were, every honest petitioner with a power over his own future and everlasting destiny; and made the avenue so open between the earth we tread upon and His own upper sanctuary, that if the bent or aspiration of our soul be towards heaven, heaven with all its glory and its happiness is our own. This at least is the object of a most legitimate desire, and that prayer is a most legitimate one which proceedeth therefrom. Ask and ye shall receive, is a promise which embraces within the rightful scope of it all that is good for the soul and for the soul's eternity. And so let us ask till we receive—let us seek till we find—let us knock till the door of salvation is opened to us.

But thus to say that we may have salvation for the asking, certainly points out what may be called a very cheap way of obtaining it—cheaper far than we naturally or usually have any imagination of. For what may be easier it is thought than the utterance of a prayer—and even although desire should be indispensable to the success of it, we shall not on that account lose our object in the present instance—for who is there that desireth not the salvation of his soul? Is there a human creature that breathes who would not like to be assured of his exemption from the agonies of a hideous and intolerable hell, and who would not prefer to spend his eternity in the palaces of heaven? Put the question even to the most reckless and abandoned in all sorts of profligacy, would it not be his dread and his aversion to lie down amongst the everlasting burnings of the place of condemnation; and would it not be his choice rather to be regaled throughout the unceasing ages of a glorious immortality, by those rivers of pleasure, and amid those sounds of jubilee, which cease not day nor night in the paradise of God? There is an instinctive horror of pain which belongs to all, and there is an instinctive love of enjoyment which equally belongs to all; and these, it may be thought, will guarantee a desire, and an honest desire, with every possessor of a sentient nature for his salvation from the one, and for his secure inheritance of the other. So that if it be enough for the salvation of any that it should be his heart's desire and prayer to be saved—who, after all, wants the desire, and who is there that might not pray? This of all subjects, it may well be reckoned, should be one where the instigation of the heart is in unison with the utterance of the mouth; and thus while God wills the salvation of all, and man both wills and asks it, what obstacle can exist in the way of Heaven—or why should there be the distance of a single hairbreadth between any soul and the certainty of its salvation?

That you may apprehend aright how this matter stands, let me state to you the whole extent and import of the term 'salvation.' We are aware of its common acceptation in the world—as if it signified but a deliverance from the penalty of sin; whereas, additionally to this, it signifies deliverance from sin itself. He shall be called Jesus, said the angel, for He shall save His people from their sins;—save them from a great deal more, let me assure you, than the torment of sin's penalty—even from the tyranny of sin's power. The one salvation is spoken of when it is said of Jesus that He hath delivered us from the wrath which is to come. The other salvation is spoken of when it is said of Him, that He hath delivered us from the present evil world. The first secures for the sinner a change of place. The second secures for him a change of principle. By the one there is effected a translation of his person from what is locally hell to what is locally heaven. By the other there is effected a translation of his heart and spirit from that which is the reigning character of hell to that which is the reigning character of heaven. The one is but a personal emancipation from the agonies of a tremendous suffering which is physical, to the joys of an exquisite gratification which is also physical. The other is a higher, for it is a moral emancipation from the thraldom of sensuality and sin to the light and the love and the liberty of a now heaven-born sacredness. This last is an inseparable constituent of the gospel salvation—or rather I would say that it is the constituting essence of it. The other is more the accompaniment than the essence. The essential salvation surely is that which stands related to the moral economy of man, even his deliverance from sin unto holiness. The subordinate or the accessory salvation is that which stands related to his animal or sentient economy, even his deliverance from the fire and brimstone of hell to the music and the splendour and the sensible enjoyments and the everlasting security of heaven. The one takes place after death. The other takes place now,—at least it has its commencement in time, though its perfect consummation is in eternity.

You will now understand what the legitimate desire is which should animate the heart when the mouth utters a prayer for salvation. There is the desire, it is true, for a future and everlasting happiness—but there is also desire for a present holiness. There is no other salvation held out to us in promise or in prospect throughout the New Testament. It is the only salvation which man has a warrant to ask; and it is the only salvation which God is willing to bestow. Nothing more true than that if man really wills the thing which he prays for, and if the thing be agreeable to the will of God, he will certainly obtain it. Now God, on the one hand, willeth all men to be saved; and if any one of these men, on the other, will for his salvation, every barrier appears to be done away, and the sinner is on the eve of a great and glorious enlargement. But be sure that you understand what this will for salvation means. It is not merely that the hand of vengeance shall be lifted off from you; it is also that the Spirit of glory and of virtue shall rest upon you. It is not merely that you shall obtain a personal exemption from that lake of living agony into which are thrown the outcasts of condemnation; it is also that you shall obtain a spiritual exemption from the vice and the voluptuousness and all the worldly affections which animate the passions and pursuits of the unregenerate upon earth. It is not alone for some vague and indefinite blessedness in future; it is for a renovation of taste and of character at present. The man in fact who desires aright and prays aright for the object of his salvation, is not merely on the eve of a great revolution in his prospects for eternity; he is on the eve of a great moral revolution in his heart and in his history at this moment. His prayer to be saved embraces, it is true, the transference of his person on the other side of death from the torments of hell to the transports of paradise—but without a transference of character on this side of death the thing is impossible; and so there is enveloped in the prayer this cry of aspiring earnestness—"O God, create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me."

LECTURE LXXVII.

ROMANS X. 1.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

Man on the one hand might like to be put into a state of happiness without holiness; but God on the other hand does not like that such a happiness shall be conferred upon him. Let a sinner pray with all fervency for his deliverance from hell and translation into heaven—he prays for that which is not agreeable to the will of God, if he desire not at the same time to be filled with heaven's charity and heaven's sacredness. Heaven, we are told, is that pure and holy place into which nought that is impure and nought that is unholy can enter; and the sinner who cries for salvation and yet would keep by his impurities, is wasting the desirousness of his heart on an object that is impossible. It is most assuredly not God's will that heaven should be peopled with any but those who, of the same family likeness with Himself, reflect His own image back again upon that throne which is irradiated with the lustre and the loveliness of all virtue. It is said that when He first willed the visible creation into existence, and looked over that terrestrial platform which His hand had garnished with so many beauties, He pronounced it to be all very good. Even for the graces of mute and unconscious materialism the Divinity may be said to have a taste and an approbation; and in the tints and the forms of Nature's glorious panorama, its ocean and its landscapes and its skies, hath the Supreme Architect of our universe embodied His own primary conceptions of the fair and the exquisite and the noble. He delights in beauty, and is revolted by deformity even in the world of matter; and the far higher characteristics which obtain in the world of spirits, call forth proportionally higher and stronger affections in the breast of the Godhead. He loves the happiness of His creatures, but He loves their virtue more. And so from that moral landscape in paradise by which His own immediate presence is surrounded, all that offendeth shall be rooted out. There is nought of the sinful or the sordid that can be admitted there. The God who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity would not tolerate the sight of what is evil. Heaven is the place of His own especial residence; and He will fill and beautify it according to His own taste for the higher graces of the mind, to His own conceptions of spiritual worth and spiritual excellence. To suit Him, it must be a land of uprightness; and love must be the music which gladdens it; and the atmosphere which blows and circulates around its habitations must be one of ethereal purity. Himself will lay out and decorate the precincts of His own dwelling-place—nor will He suffer aught to settle there which can violate the moral harmony of such a scene, or mar the spectacle of its perfect and unspotted holiness.

Now, remember that in praying to be saved you just pray that such a heaven may be the place of your settlement through all eternity—else there is no significancy in your prayer. It is not enough that you seize by faith on a deed of justification. You must, with diligence and effort and all the expedients of moral and spiritual culture, enter forthwith on a busy process of sanctification. It is well that Jesus Christ hath by the expiation of the cross moved away that barrier which obstructed our access to the Jerusalem above. But now that a way for the ransomed of the Lord is open, let us forget not that it is a way of holiness. There is a work of salvation going on in heaven, by which Jesus Christ in some way that He hath not explained is there employed in preparing a place for us. "I go to prepare a place for you." But there is also a work of salvation going on in earth, by which Jesus Christ through His word and Spirit is here employed in preparing us for the place. And our distinct business is to be ever practising and ever improving ourselves in the virtues of this preparation. It is not a selfish affection for happiness in the general which forms the leading principle of Christianity. It is a sacred affection for that happiness which lies in holiness—or rather for that holiness which, to every being possessed of a moral nature, brings the best and the highest happiness in its train. In one word, if you take the right aim for salvation, it must be a moral heaven to which you aspire; and ere you can find entrance into such a heaven you must be moralized.

This desire for salvation then, if rightly understood, is desire for a present holiness. This longing after heaven at the last, is, with every honest and intelligent disciple, a longing after the virtues now which flourish there. There will be an immediate entrance on heaven's uprightness and heaven's piety. So long as we are in this world, we have neither reached the hell nor the heaven of eternity. We are only on the one or other of those paths which lead to them. Now, to turn from the wrong to the right path, is just to turn from sin unto sacredness; and in the very act of so turning, we receive strength for all the fatigues of that new journey which leadeth unto Zion. Turn unto me, says God, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you. This influence from on high will be given to your efforts and your prayers. Your prayer for some abstract and indefinite beatitude in another state of being, is not a prayer which accords with the will of God, and can no more be listened to by Him or meet with acceptance, than any sordid or selfish petition for some luxury or splendour of this world which your heart is set upon. But when, instead of this, the prayer is for that beatitude which lies in holiness; when it is a prayer for the very beatitude of the good and the glorified spirits in heaven; when the desire for a joyful eternity above is thus consecrated by a desire for grace and godliness below; in one word, when in place of a mere animal or selfish aspiration for the comfort, it becomes a moral and a sacred aspiration for the character of heaven, the prayer to a holy Creator from a creature desirous to be holy—then, in the answer of such a prayer, will the gospel make full vindication of that gracious economy which it announces to the world. The pardon of his sins through the blood of Christ, is as free to him as are the light and air of heaven to the commoners of Nature. The Spirit who gives him victory over his sins, and upholds him on his advancing way to all righteousness, is alike free to him —nor does there exist one obstacle in the way of his salvation, who is honestly intent to be as he ought and to do as he ought.

This argument is not wholly inapplicable at a sacramental season, which generally more than usual is a season of devotion. There comes now upon many a spirit a greater than its wonted desirousness about the things of eternity; and there is withal the imagination that what you are to do upon the morrow,* is somehow connected with the furtherance and the security of your everlasting interests. Now the impression which I desire to leave upon you is, that your good in a future world can in no conceivable way be promoted by it, save in so far as it subserves your goodness in this world. The literalities of a sacramental observation will of themselves avail you nothing; and there is superstition, at once the most deceitful and degrading, in the thought that your claim for heaven can at all be improved by an act of sacredness which leaves not one habit or one affection of sacredness behind it. This we particularly address to those who make due presentation of themselves on the communion Sabbath, and discharge themselves of all the punctualities of the communion table, and yet the whole year round cleave most tenaciously and with hearts full of secularity to the dust of a perishable world—who in hand and in person intromit with all the forms of the ordinance, but catch not so much as one breath upon their spirits from the air of the upper sanctuary—or, if they do experience among the solemnities of a rare and remarkable occasion some transient inspiration, all is dissipated, and goes to nought, when they return to their homes and thence lapse again into all the earthliness of their unchanged natures. Be assured that the part you thus take in what may be called the mechanism of a Sacrament, without any part in the mind which should animate and pervade it, will have no other bearing on your immortal state than to aggravate your condemnation; and therefore to escape the guilt which lies in this mockery of Heaven, and to turn the morrow's service into the real purposes of your salvation, let me entreat you to open your heart to the affecting realities which are couched in the symbols and shadowed forth as it were in the acts of the Institution. The bread and the wine which are the memorials of your atonement should encourage even the guiltiest of you all to draw nigh in faith—for there is no guilt beyond the reach of that atonement; but remember that you must also draw nigh with full purpose of heart after the new obedience of the gospel. Coming thus, you are warranted to sit down at the table of the Sacrament; and the prayers of a heart desirous of a present holiness as of a future heaven, will most surely meet with acceptance, and as surely be answered with power. Your prayer to be saved from the punishment of sin, lifted while the emblems of the Redeemer's sacrifice are before you, will most certainly prevail. Your prayer to be saved from the power of sin, lifted in the presence of Him who is Master of the assembly, and to whom the dispensation of the Spirit has been committed, will as certainly prevail; and your joining in this ordinance will contribute to save, only in so far as it contributes to sanctify you.

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* Preached on the day before a Sacrament.

But I have all along spoken as if this were a direct prayer for the object of one's own personal salvation; whereas it is an intercessory prayer, and suggests what we ought to do for the salvation of those who are dear to us. Paul had made many a vain effort for the salvation of his countrymen. In every city where he found them, he began with the Jews ere he addressed the overtures of the gospel to the Gentiles. His obligation to them was the first obligation of which he acquitted himself. In the discharge of it he incurred many a hazard, and brought upon himself the hatred of those who had been formerly his friends, and made prodigious exertion in the way of travelling, and preaching, and doing all the labours of the apostolical office, in behalf of these his kinsmen according to the flesh; and not till compelled by the hostility of a whole nation either to flee from place to place, or turn him to the Gentiles, did he desist from the strenuousness of his efforts to secure the immortal well-being of those of his own family or in his own land. And even after every effort failed, still he had recourse to prayer. The desire of his heart was not extinguished by the disappointment he met with upon earth; but when baffled and thrown back upon him there, it took an upward direction to heaven—when obstructed on all sides by the resistance of man, it ascended without obstruction to the throne of God. Even in the busiest period of his work and his warfare for the conversion of these obstinate Israelites, he mixed with his activities his prayers—but after the activities were repressed, the prayers continued to arise. He was forced to desist from the labours of the hand, but the love in his heart still abode unquenched and unquenchable; and when he could do no more, he prayed for them. This survived the longest and the last of all the other expedients; and long after he had found it was vain to labour, he did not think it was vain to pray.

This might serve as admonition to those whose hearts are set on the eternity of relatives or friends—to the mother who has watched and laboured for years that the good seed might have fixture in the hearts of her children, but does not find that this precious deposit has yet settled or had occupation there—to the sister whose gentle yet earnest remonstrances have been wholly unable to control a brother's waywardness—to that one member perhaps of a family whom the grace of the Spirit hath selected, and who now strives and supplicates in the midst of an alienated household, that all may be arrested in their way and turned unto God—to that holy and heaven-born disciple, whom the pollutions of the world have touched not, but who standing alone in a companionship of scorners, mourns over the profaneness and the profligacy that hitherto have marked all his solemn warnings, all his friendly but ineffectual protestations. All these may, like other zealous missionaries, have had but a hard experience. They may have long been in contact and collision with the power of sin and unbelief in the hearts of others, and had much to discourage them. Their fidelity may have given offence—their affectionate counsels may have been spurned—their moral earnestness may have been laughed at—all their expedients to impress or to convince may have vanished into impotency—their very speech may at length become a signal for the attitude of suspicion and of prompt resistance on the part of their fellows; and so their every argument may only strengthen, may only confirm, the impenitency which it was meant to soften or do away. In these, and in many other ways, may they receive most palpable intimation that they are doing no good, and even perhaps but fixing more inveterately than before the distaste of children or of friends for God and godliness. And so may they be tempted to desist, even as the apostles desisted, from their countrymen. Yet let them never forget, that what has heretofore been impracticable to performance may not be impracticable to prayer. With man it may be impossible; but with God all things are possible. That cause which has so oft been defeated and is now hopeless on the field of exertion, may on the field of prayer and of faith be triumphant. Never cease then your supplications to the sanctuary above for that power to turn the unregenerate and subdue them—which all your experience has told you does not reside unless it be given, in the earthen vessels that are below. Let those anxieties for the Christianity either of your household or of your acquaintanceship, which have hitherto been so unproductive of good—let them still continue as before to be unbosomed in the ear of your Father in heaven. He willeth intercessions to be made for all men, and He willeth all men to be saved. These declarations place you on firm and high vantage-ground in praying for human souls; and never, we may be well assured, never can any intercession be lifted with greater acceptance than that of a Christian parent, when he asks in behalf of those children who now gladden his home upon earth—that they may be preserved and permitted to spend with him their eternity in heaven.

It must not be disguised, however, that this is a matter on which parents may delude themselves—that in their disinclination to spiritual things and their indolence together, they may be glad to stand exonerated from the fatigues of performance, and take refuge in the formalities of prayer—that under the semblance of doing homage to the omnipotence of grace, they may omit the doing of those things which it is the office of grace to make effectual for the conversion of the human spirit—that in contemplating the part of the Holy Ghost as the agent, they may forget their own part as the instruments of this mighty operation: and therefore would we warn them lest they turn the orthodoxy of their creed into a justification for the laxity and remissness of their conduct. That prayer never can avail which is not the prayer of honesty; and it is not the prayer of honesty, if, even though you pray to the uttermost for the religion of others, you do not also perform to the uttermost. Could we only purge the prayers of men of all their hypocrisy, then should we behold the promises of the Bible nobly accredited by the verifications of experience; and the interchange of petitions and their responses between heaven and earth would demonstrate to the eye of observation, that there was indeed a living reality in the gospel. Even as it is, though we cannot just say that Christianity always runs in families, yet frequent enough are the instances of a transmitted faith and a transmitted holiness from parents unto children—to assure us that did the former but acquit themselves, in all strenuousness and with all supplication, of their duty, the blessing of an efficiency from above would descend upon the souls of the latter; and manifold more than at present would be the examples of those who were born unto Christian parents being also born unto God.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ROMANS X. 2.

"For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

VERSE 2.—It is evident from this verse that the Israelites had one good quality while they wanted another. But the remarkable thing—I had almost said the strange thing of this verse—is, that the apostle should make their possession of this one good quality the reason of his prayer. 'It is my prayer that they might be saved—*for* I bear them record that they have a zeal of God.' They had zeal, but they wanted knowledge. One would think that if they wanted both they would at least stand in greater need of his prayers; and the mystery is, how it comes about that their having something of what is good should be the moving cause why Paul should be led to pray for their supreme good, even the everlasting salvation of their souls—a pretty plain intimation, that if they had not been in the possession at least of this something, if they had not had thus much of good—even zeal for God, he would not have prayed for them.

The only explanation I can give of this peculiarity, and it appears to me a very probable one, is this. You know that it is only the prayer of faith that availeth; and that in proportion as this faith is staggered or weakened in any manner, in that proportion prayer loses of its efficacy. It is thus that you have not the same heart, the same encouragement, the same confidence, in praying for some great and palpable unlikelihood—as in praying for that which you either know to be agreeable to the will of God, or to be in harmony with the established processes of Nature and of Providence. It is thus that you could not pray so hopefully for the salvation of a thorough and confirmed reprobate, as for that of a man in whom you could perceive some lurking remainders of good—some aspirations towards a state of betterness—some symptoms or promises of a coming penitency or coming amendment. When all these are utterly extinguished, then faith is extinguished, and the tongue of prayer is either put to silence or paralysed. There is the despair of any reformation; and whosoever asks for that which he despairs of, let not that man think that he shall obtain it of the Lord. There is a dependence affirmed constantly in the New Testament between that faith wherewith a prayer ascends upwardly to heaven, and that fulfilment which comes in answer thereto downwardly upon earth; and whatever therefore shall tell adversely or favourably on the faith of supplicants below, must tell adversely or favourably on the fulfilments that are granted in the sanctuary above. And so it is just as if all chance of a man's salvation were done away, when all hope of it had died away from the hearts of those who should pray for it.

There is an observable harmony here between that process which takes place in the hearts of believers, and that process which takes place in the counsels and acts of the upper sanctuary. You know that according to the usual methods of the Divine administration, the Spirit is given in larger measure and larger manifestations to those who have duteously responded to His earlier intimations, or made right and faithful use of His first and feebler influences upon their hearts—whereas He is more and more withdrawn from those who quarrel with or who resist these first impressions of His upon the conscience—so that at length he may take a final and irrecoverable departure from their souls, and abandon to their own infatuation the unhappy men, who, growing every year in moral hardihood, live in the recklessness of all that is sacred, and die at the last in fatal impenitency. With this view of it you will be at no loss to understand the saying—that to him who hath, more shall be given; and from him who hath not, there shall be taken away even that which he hath. Paul himself, who served God with good conscience from his youth, though then in ignorance and in unbelief, had at length a full revelation given to him—whereas those of his countrymen who even against conscience maligned and resisted the Saviour, and so put away from them the things which belonged to their peace, were delivered up to that state of judicial blindness in which they were for ever hid from their eyes. The life of a Christian is made up of perpetual accessions of grace from one degree of it to another, till he arrives at perfection, and is ripe for glory. The life of an impenitent is made up of perpetual and successive extinctions of one good feeling, of one lingering sensibility after another, till he pass away into utter darkness, and is ripe for the awful, the irremediable destruction which follows it. There is a point somewhere in this dismal and descending pathway, where the irrecoverable step is taken—and he has sinned unto death. You will here be reminded of the apostle John, who bids us pray for those who have not sinned unto death; but who adds, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it." Now, as the last symptoms of any remaining good die away from the character of these reprobates, so the last sparks of a hope for their recovery die away from the hearts of bystanders who are looking on, and who at length cease to persuade and even cease to pray for them. Paul had not just sunk so low in despondency with regard to the Jews. He was not yet discouraged out of all faith and all prayer about them. He still observed one good point or property in the character of that nation—a zeal of God, even that very zeal which actuated himself when he breathed forth threatenings and slaughter against Christians—and so he still could hope, and still could pray for them.

From the materials of such an argument as this there may be constructed a powerful appeal, by which, if possible, to arrest the headlong way of that moral desperado, who, hastening on from one enormity to another, is fast losing all the delicacies of conscience, the truth and the tenderness of other days—in whose breast that light of the inner man which has been termed the candle of the Lord is fading away to its ultimate extinction; and whom the Spirit, tired and provoked by the stubborn resistance of all His warning, is on the eve perhaps of abandoning, and that for ever, to his own heart's wickedness, since he will have it so. Every year finds him a more confirmed alien from God, and stouter in all the purposes of rebellion than before. The disease of his soul grows and gathers in inveteracy—till, encrusted all over with that judicial hardness to which he has been delivered, all the touching demonstrations of Providence and all the loud artillery of menacing sermons play upon him in vain. When age and disease overtake him, even the alarum-bell of his coming mortality may bring no terror to his ear; and with all his sensibilities lying prostrate under the power of that corruption which has withered them, he may be alike unappalled by the demonstrations of his guilt, and the fell denunciations of the vengeance which is due to it. The truth is that he is sunken, he is profoundly sunken in spiritual lethargy; and now, beyond the possibility of recall, he affords the dire and the dreadful spectacle of a helpless, a hopeless creature, whom the Spirit of God hath irrevocably forsaken. Know then, all ye regardless hearers who have entered and are now walking on a path of wilful iniquity, that this is the state to which you are descending. Your friends behold the progress of this impenitency. They sigh and they even supplicate Heaven on your account; but the time may speedily arrive when the characteristics of your impiety shall look so indelible and so desperate, that to supplicate in faith is beyond them. And, oh! is it not time to retrace your footsteps on this way of destruction, unknowing as you are how near or how soon you shall be on the verge of that condition when the Spirit of God shall cease to strive, and the very parents who gave you birth may weep, but cannot pray for you!

The Jewish character was not yet so utterly desolated of all worth and goodness as to drive the apostle from hope's last refuge—even prayer. They wanted knowledge, but they had zeal; and this so far propped his spirit in that exercise, to the success of which a certain faith and a certain hopefulness are so indispensable. That must have been a valuable property, in virtue of which they could still be prayed for. But that on the other hand must have been a most important and essential property, from the want of which they eventually perished. Had they added knowledge to their zeal, they would still have remained the favourites of Heaven; and from the actual history of the Jewish people, we may learn what a serious want the want of knowledge is. That day of their tremendous visitation, in the prospect of which our Saviour shed tears over their devoted city, came upon them, to use His own language, just because they *knew* not the things which belonged to their peace. Their ruin as a nation was the effect of their ignorance; and in that fearful, that overwhelming doom, which our Saviour wept over, but would not recall, we have experimental proof of that alliance which obtains by the ordinations of the gospel, between the knowledge of man and his salvation, on the one hand, and between the want of that knowledge, and his utter and irreversible wretchedness, upon the other. The judgment which went forth against them because of their ignorance, had in it as much of the spirit and character of a vengeance as if it had been inflicted on the worst moral perversities whereof humanity is capable. It is true that the awful extermination came upon them because they had killed the Prince of life. But it was in the spirit of a blind zeal, and as Peter and John testify, through ignorance that they did it. Their condemnation still resolves itself into the want of knowledge—for had they known, Paul says, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Let us not then underrate the importance of knowledge in religion; nor, under the imagination that ignorance is not responsible or not a punishable offence, hold that men might be in safety however defective in point of information, however wrong in point of mere understanding.

But in addition to the historical proofs, for what may be called the religious importance of knowledge, which might be drawn from the narratives of Scripture, there is abundance of still more direct proof, in its merely doctrinal or didactic passages. On the one hand, the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ is said to be eternal life. And on the other hand, many are said to perish for lack of knowledge. When Christ shall come in flaming fire and amid the elements of dissolving nature, it is to take vengeance on those who know not God. Knowledge and ignorance in fact are dealt with, even as righteousness and sin are dealt with. They are dealt with morally, or as the proper subjects of a moral reckoning; and whereas under our existing economy the pleasures and preferments of a joyful eternity in heaven come in train of the one, hell and destruction and all the penal consequences of guilt in most frightful aggravation are made to follow in the train of the other.

Now the question is, ought this in moral fairness to be? The equity of such a dispensation has been stoutly and openly denied. It has been asked if man be responsible for knowledge or understanding or belief, just as he is responsible for the dispositions of his heart or the doings of his hand. They can understand how man should be punished for his wrong behaviour; but they understand not how man should be punished for his wrong belief. The difficulty is to conceive on what ground the mere views of the understanding should properly be made the subjects of count or reckoning at all. Are the wrong views of the understanding to be resented or revenged upon, just as you would resent or revenge the wrong volitions of the will? You at once perceive the justice of retribution for the conduct; but you do not perceive the justice of retribution for the creed. You would never think of blame or of vengeance either for the height of a man's stature, or for the hue and the features of his countenance. And in like manner the opinions of the judgment are held by some to be equally exempted, as things of physical and organic necessity, from blame or from vengeance. Man is held by them to be responsible for his doings, which he can help; but not for his doctrines, which they say he cannot help—and so the God of Christianity has been charged with unrighteousness; and Christianity itself, with this dread inscription upon its forehead, that "he who believeth not shall be damned,"—has been indignantly exclaimed against as a hard and a most revolting dispensation.

Now we shall not enter on the consideration that the punishment consequent on the unbelief is not all for the unbelief, but for the guilt of a broken law, the condemnation of which takes its own proper and primary effect upon you, because you have not found your way to the place of refuge or of protection therefrom. This is very true—yet it is further true, that the guilt of a broken law is everywhere spoken of as enhanced and deepened to tenfold aggravation by the guilt of a rejected gospel. There is a wrath that abideth on unbelievers—even that wrath which their sins had excited in the bosom of the Deity, and which they have not escaped from by the way announced and intimated in the New Testament. But there is also a wrath added to the former, and augmented on the head of unbelievers, just because they have not betaken themselves to that way. In other words, there is a displeasure on the part of God towards unbelief, just as there is a displeasure towards any moral violation. The creed of the infidel is dealt with as his crime; and the question still remains, How comes it that the mere errors of the understanding should have the same sort of delinquency affixed to them, as the wilful errors either of the heart or of the conduct?

In reply to this interrogation, we fully admit that no man is punished for what he cannot help; but then we affirm that his belief in certain circumstances, (and we think that Christianity is in these circumstances) is that which he can help. We admit that no moral delinquency should be charged on that which is not wilful—but we affirm that many are the occasions in which the belief or the unbelief is wilful; and that therefore there might be no contravention of obvious justice in pronouncing the one to be a duty, and in proceeding against the other as you would against a crime. It is utterly a mistake to imagine that knowledge and opinion and belief, and in a word the various states of the understanding, are in no way dependent upon the will. It is by an act of the will that you set yourself to the acquisition of knowledge. It is by an act of the will at the first, and by a continued act of the will afterwards, that you first commence, and then continue a prolonged examination into the grounds of an opinion. It is at the bidding of the will, not that you believe without evidence, but that you investigate the evidence on which you might believe. In all these cases the will either gives its consent or withholds it. It cannot create the light of evidence any more than it can create the light of nature. But it lies with it whether the evidence shall be attended to or regarded with the eye of the mind, even as it lies with it whether the illuminated landscape shall be looked upon or regarded with the eye of the body. It is in your power to shut or to avert the mental eye, just as it is in your power to shut or to avert the corporeal eye. It is in no way your fault that you do not see when it is dark; but it is in every way your fault that you do not look when either the light of the natural heavens, or the light of Heaven's revelation is around you. It is thus that the will has virtually to do with the ultimate belief, just because it has to do with the various steps of that process which goes before it. Where there is candour, which is a moral property, the due attention will be given; and the man will arrive at the state of being right intellectually, but just because he is right morally. When there is the opposite of candour—a thing pronounced upon by all as a moral unfairness—the due attention will be refused; and the man will be landed in the state of being wrong intellectually, but just because he is wrong morally.

You find a most impressive exemplification of this in the history of those very Jews whom we now are considering. During the whole of our Saviour's ministry upon earth they were plied with evidences, which if they had but attended to them would have carried their belief in the validity of His claims and credentials as a Messenger from heaven. But the belief was painful to them; and at all hazards they resolved to bar the avenues of their minds against the admittance of it. This was the attitude, the wilful, the hardy, the resolved attitude in which they listened to all His addresses and looked upon all His miracles. That unwelcome doctrine which so humbled the pride, and did such violence to the bigotry of their nation, was not to be borne with—and, rather than harbour a thing so intolerably offensive, they shut their minds against all that truth which lay both in the words and in the works of the Son of God; and they shut their hearts against all that tenderness as well as truth which fell in softest accents from a Saviour's lips, or beamed in mildness and mercy upon them from a Saviour's countenance. Who does not see that the will had a principal concern in all this opposition—that the pride and the passion and the interest and the ease, that these propensities of man's active and voluntary nature, had undoubted sway and operation in this warfare; that their love of darkness and their hatred of light affixed to their unbelief the stigma of a moral condemnation—their love of that which left a veil over their corruptions, their hatred of that which laid them open to the display and the disturbance of an exposure which they feared? It was on the strength of these moral perversities that they resisted and withstood the Saviour, and at length perished in the delusion which themselves had fostered. Theirs was not the darkness of men whom no light had visited, but it was the darkness of men who obstinately shut their eyes—who had lulled their own consciences asleep; and whom neither the voice of pitying friendship, nor the voice of loud and angry menace could again awaken. They were in this state when Christ wept over them, as He pronounced the doom of their approaching overthrow—a doom that fell upon them, not because of their mental delusion, but because this delusion was the fruit and the forthcoming of their moral depravity—not because they had minds that did not receive the truth, but because they had hearts that did not love and would not listen to it.

And this is for our admonition to whom the latter ends of the world have come. In this our day the want of faith is still due, we believe, as heretofore, to the want of a thorough moral earnestness. Did we only prevail upon you to seek after, to inquire as you ought, we have no doubt that you would come to believe as you ought. If blind, we fear that you are wilfully blind; and if short of that faith which is unto salvation, it is because you are not honestly and with all your heart in pursuit of salvation. You are not giving earnest heed to the witness upon earth, that is to the Bible, which is a light shining in a dark place; and which at last would manifest its own truth and divinity to the conscience of him who attentively regarded it. And you are not sending forth earnest prayer to the witness in heaven, that is to the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to pour the light of a convincing and an affecting demonstration over the pages of the written record. You are not doing what you might if you so willed—and if you do not see the light of that evidence which belongs to the truth as it is in Jesus, it is positively because you are not looking for it. In other words, if you die in mental darkness, it is because you live in moral unconcern; and whatever the damnation be which rests on unbelief, it is altogether due unto yourselves. Often are you visited with the misgivings of a conscience which tells you that your present state is far from satisfactory; but these you contrive to stifle and suppress. The whole business of your souls is postponed, and wilfully postponed, from one day and from one year to another; and abiding in darkness because you choose the darkness, you remain to the end of your lives in a voluntary destitution of that knowledge for the lack of which men perish everlastingly.

LECTURE LXXIX.

ROMANS X. 3-5.

"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

THERE should be no difficulty in fixing whether the term 'righteousness' in this passage must be understood according to its personal or its legal sense—whether that righteousness which designates a character that is marked by its virtues and its graces; or that which is pronounced by a judge on him who is entitled thereby to its honours and rewards. In this place, as in others, the context clears up the text. For example, in Matthew v. 20, the righteousness which is there spoken of cannot be mistaken for any other than the personal—that being made obvious by the illustrations which follow, and whence it appears that its superiority over the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees lies in the higher style of certain virtues which are there specified. And again, in Galatians iii. 21, there can be as little mistake, when we affix the legal or judicial meaning to the righteousness there spoken of—it being such a righteousness as could have given life, and which is viewed therefore not in the moral graces of which it is made up, but in the rewards, even those of a blissful eternity, which are judicially conferred upon it—just as the ministration of death in 2 Cor. iii. 7, is clearly juridical, it being termed in verse 9, the ministration of condemnation, for death is the penalty of sin: and so the ministration of righteousness contrasted therewith must be juridical also, it being the ministration of life, even that life which is the reward of righteousness. In like manner when one looks to the verse before us in conjunction with the verses which immediately succeed, there should be no difficulty in settling the judicial import of the term 'righteousness' throughout this whole passage of the apostle's argument—as being, not the righteousness which has its place in the character or person of a disciple, but the righteousness which can be pleaded or stated by him at the bar of jurisprudence when he stands there as a claimant for the rewards and honours of eternity. In short, it is the righteousness which gives a right to eternal life or which challenges eternal life as its due—that righteousness which the Jews fell short of, because they sought to establish it by the merit of their own doings, while they refused to make use of the plea which God offered to put into their hands as a righteousness that He would accept—this being a righteousness of which they were ignorant, or would not acknowledge, or would not submit themselves thereto. "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness," or of that righteousness on the ground of which or consideration of which He would take man into acceptance; "and going about to establish a righteousness of their own," seeking to make good their title to heaven, as rightful claimants to its inheritance on the strength or merit of their own proper services —"they would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God," but sought to be justified in their own way, which was by their own works, rather than by His method of justification.

My only additional remark on this verse is, that in the ignorance here spoken of, there is something more than the mere passive blindness of those who cannot help themselves because of the total darkness by which they are encompassed. It was very much the ignorance of those who would not open their eyes. There was an activity, a will in it, as much as there was in the other things ascribed to them in these words—in the 'going about' to establish a different righteousness from that which they would not acknowledge, or would not submit to—resisting it, in fact, because of their not liking it. This forms the true principle on which the condemnation of unbelief rests. "They love the darkness rather than the light;" and so the ignorance or unbelief is criminal—just as far as there were affection and choice in it. Even as the Gentiles "liked not to retain God in their knowledge"—even so the Jews liked not in this instance to admit God into their knowledge, or give entertainment in their minds to that way of salvation which He had devised for the recovery of a guilty world—even the transference of man's sins to the person of Christ, and the transference of Christ's righteousness to the persons of all who believe in Him. It is the part which the will has in it that makes ignorance the proper object of a vindictive retribution; and so when Christ cometh, He will take vengeance on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ. The will has to do with the want of obedience; and so far as the want of knowledge is punishable, the will has to do with that want also. There is a wilful resistance to the light—though a resistance, it must be admitted, which the light itself may overcome by the greater force of its evidence, by the greater brightness and intensity of its own manifestation—just as Paul's ignorance and unbelief were overpowered by the light that shone upon him near Damascus; and as the faith of converts in the present day is carried, when God is pleased to reveal Christ in them, by commanding the light to shine out of darkness, or by calling them out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel.

Ver. 4.—'For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' There is one obvious sense in which Christ is the end of the law; and that is when the law viewed as a schoolmaster brings us to the conclusion, as to its last lesson, that Christ is our only refuge, our only righteousness—thereby shutting us up unto the faith. But this is not the sort of end which is meant here. We should have a more precise understanding of the verse by taking the word *end* as equivalent to *purpose*—and that a purpose too which the law was fitted to serve not merely after it was broken, but at the time of its original institution, and when it was first set up for the moral government of men. Now that the law has been violated, and we are the outcasts of its rightful condemnation, it is good to be schooled by it into the lesson that Christ is our only hiding-place, in whom there is no condemnation; and thus to make Christ the end or the final landing-place of that educational process through which we are conducted, when studying the high precepts and authority of the law, and our own immeasurable distance and deficiency therefrom. It is not thus however that this verse is to be understood; and for the right determination of what it signifies, we should go back to one of the purposes for which the law was given at the time of its first ordination—a purpose to be gained, not after the breaking of it, but which would have been gained by the keeping of it. One of these purposes was to secure the moral rightness of man's character and conduct. But another of these purposes was to secure for him a legal right to eternal life. The one was the end of the law for his personal holiness; the other was the end of the law for his judicial righteousness; and this is what we hold to be precisely the 'end of the law for righteousness' in our text. Its direct and primary object was that man should be justified by his obedience thereto; but man, falling short of this object or end by falling short of perfect obedience, can only now obtain it in Christ, in whom alone we have righteousness—even a part and an interest in that everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in by His obedience—which righteousness, with all its associated privileges and rewards, is unto all and upon all who believe. It is the merit of His obedience imputed unto us and made ours by faith, which forms our right or title-deed of entry into the kingdom of heaven. He is the Lord our Righteousness; and in receiving Him we receive that righteousness which it was the end of the law to have secured for us had it been by us fulfilled; but which we in vain seek by the law, now that it has been broken.*

Ver. 5.—'For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.' One expedient by which men have attempted to dilute or do away the substance of the gospel, is to represent the insufficiency of the law for salvation as attaching only to the ceremonial law of Moses. In the passage now before us, however, the righteousness which is of the law is said to be superseded by the righteousness which is of faith; and the former righteousness, or that which is laid aside, attaches to the law whereof Moses said that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. This surely must include the moral as well as the ceremonial. The great Lawgiver of the Jews nowhere represents the doing of the things of the ceremonial law as enough for life. "Cursed is every one," he saith, "who continueth not in all the words of the book to do them." And so far is any sufficiency of this sort from being awarded to the ceremonial alone—there is many a prophetic remonstrance founded on the insignificance of the ceremonial, when compared with the worth and lasting obligation of the moral. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Put away the evil of your doings, and learn to do well." It is not if a man do the things of the ceremonial—it is if he do the things of the whole law, that he shall live. It is our sufficiency for the righteousness of the whole law which is here brought to the trial; and if found wanting, which eventually it will be in every instance, we must infer that man can no more attain to everlasting life by his most strenuous observation of moral righteousness, than by his most faithful and laborious discharge of the Mosaic ritual.

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* For a fuller elucidation of this verse, see our Sermon on Romans x. 4, in vol. iii. of our Congregational Sermons.

It is on the ground of the moral law and of it alone, that this trial for eternity now rests. We of the present day stand delivered from the obligations of the Jewish ritual, and of its burdensome services. Should we decline the gospel, we shall be dealt with purely and exclusively as the objects of the moral law; and still it holds true that the man who doeth these things shall reach everlasting life without a gospel and without a Saviour. If the law, the moral law, be sufficient to any man for this object—then to him the gospel is uncalled for. It is thus that the economy of grace may be brought to the trial of its worth and its importance; and to this very law the man who yields a perfect moral obedience may challenge for himself the right of neglecting its offers—the claim to an inheritance in heaven without the need of a passport from Him who is represented to us as the Author of a great salvation.

The two ways to eternal life here brought into comparison are clearly and distinctly contrasted. The one is by doing—the other is by believing: the one by achieving for ourselves a full and finished righteousness—the other by believing that Christ has achieved a full and sufficient righteousness for us, and makes each and all of us as welcome to its rewards as if they had been earned in our own person, by the merit of our own services. It is either in the one or other of these ways that heaven is at all accessible—so that should we both fall short of the first, and refuse to enter upon the second, we are hopelessly and helplessly barred from the paradise of God.

There are two places, as it were, at which these respective ways may be compared with each other—either at the entrance of them before we set out; or anywhere, after that we have set out, along the pathway of each—whether cheered on by the encouragements, or struggling with the difficulties peculiar to the one or the other of them.

I. Let us first take a view of the state of matters at the entrance of the two ways—when man, under the first effectual visitation of earnestness, resolves to go forth in busy search and prosecution after the good of his eternity. And here a consideration meets us at the very outset of the way of doing; and that is whether the condition of eternal life in that way be not already fallen from, and so the eternal life itself already forfeited. It is he who doeth all things that shall live. Have we hitherto done all things? Are we in circumstances now for making a clear outset on this enterprise for heaven? It is not enough that there be the purpose of universal, of unreserved obedience in all time coming. There must have been the performance of an obedience alike universal, alike unreserved, throughout all the stages of the history that is past. Can the memory and the conscience of any man living depone to this? Can he lay his hand upon his heart, and say without misgiving—that throughout all the successive days of his past existence in the world there has ascended to heaven the continuous incense of a pure and sinless offering? Has he altogether loved God as he ought? Has he altogether lived among his fellows as he ought? Has his hand done all that it might in the services of benevolence? Has his heart been filled as it should have been—if not with the sensibilities, at least with the purposes and the aspirations of piety? Has the will of the Creator, in no one instance, made place for his own waywardness? Has that law, every jot and tittle of which must be fulfilled, had this unfailing, this unswerving, this unexcepted fulfilment rendered to it by him? Can he appeal to every hour of his bygone history, and confidently speak of each having, without one flaw or scruple of deviation, been pervaded by that loyalty of principle, by that grateful recollection, by those duteous conformities of a heart ever glowing with affection, and of a hand ever glowing with activity, which the creature owes to the Creator who gave him birth? These are questions which must be settled ere he can advance one hopeful footstep on his way to heaven by the deeds of the law. Should there be one single deed either of sin or of deficiency to soil the retrospect of his past experience, it nullifies the enterprise. By a single act of disobedience the power of making good our eternity in this way is gone, and gone irretrievably. Heaven may still become ours by a deed of mercy. But that it should be ours by a judicial award of law, and of law sitting in cognisance over our deserts and our doings, is a thing impossible.

If the conscience be at all enlightened, this will be felt as a difficulty which overhangs the entrance of the proposed journey to heaven in the way of obedience. The sense of a debt which no effort of ours can possibly lessen, and far less extinguish—the sense of a guilt that by ourselves is wholly inexpiable—the sense of an impassable gulf between us and God, seeing that when viewed as our Lawgiver, and ere reparation for the injury of

His outraged law shall have been made, His attributes of truth and justice and holiness unite to lay an interdict on any terms or treaty of reconciliation—these are what paralyse the movements of a conscious sinner; and just because they paralyse his hopes. The likest thing to it in human experience is, when a decreet of bankruptcy without a discharge has come forth on the man who has long struggled with his difficulties, and is now irrecoverably sunk under the weight of them. There is an effectual drag laid upon this man's activity. The hand of diligence is forthwith slackened when all the fruits of diligence are thus liable to be seized upon—and that by a rightful claim of such magnitude as no possible strenuousness can meet or satisfy. The processes of business come to a stand or are suspended—when others are standing by ready to devour the proceeds of business so soon as they are realized, or at least to divert them from the use of the unhappy man and the good of his family. The spirit of industry dies within him when he finds that he can neither make aught for himself, nor, from the enormous mass of his obligations, make any sensible advances towards his liberation. In these circumstances he loses all heart and all hope for exertion of any sort; and either breaks forth into recklessness or is chilled into inactivity by despair. And it is precisely so in the case of a sinner towards God. If he feel as he ought, he feels as if the mountain of his iniquities had separated him from his Maker. There is the barrier of an unsettled controversy between them, which, do his uttermost, he cannot move away; and the strong though secret feeling of this is a chief ingredient in the lethargy of nature. There is a haunting jealousy of God which keeps us at a distance from Him. There is the same willing forgetfulness of Him that there is of any other painful or disquieting object of contemplation. God, when viewed singly as the Lawgiver, is also viewed as the Judge who must condemn—as the rightful creditor whose payments or whose penalties are alike overwhelming. We are glad to make our escape from all this dread and discouragement into the sweet oblivion of Nature. The world becomes our hiding-place from the Deity—and in despair of making good our eternity by our works, we work but for the interests of time; and, because denizens of earth, we, estranged from the hopes of heaven, never once set forth in good earnest upon its preparations.

These are the impossibilities which, at the very commencement, beset this way of making good your eternity by your doings; and from which there is no release to the spiritual bankrupt, till the gospel puts its discharge into his hands. By this gospel there is a deed of amnesty made known, to which all are welcome. There is revealed to us a surety who hath taken the whole of our debt upon Himself—having fulfilled the ample acquittance of all our obligations, and so made us clear with God. Even to the worst and most worthless of sinners the offer of this great deliverance is made. It is our faith in the reality of this offer which constitutes our acceptance of it; and whereas in the way of doing, the very entrance was impracticably closed against us—this initial obstruction is entirely moved aside from the way of believing. In the language of the Psalmist, the bond is loosed; and restored to hope, we are restored to alacrity in the bidden services and preparations of eternity. With the conscience lightened, through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, of its guilts and of its fears—we are made to walk with the feeling, with the hopeful inspiration of men at liberty. The debt is cancelled; and we can start anew in that enterprise for heaven, on which but for the ransom of the New Testament there lies a burden of utter impotency and despair. Like the emancipated debtor to whom the fruits of all his future toil and diligence are now fully assured to him, a weight is taken off from the activities of nature. Our labour is no longer in vain—because now it is labour in the Lord; and every effort becomes a step in advance towards heaven, when thus the old obedience of the law is exchanged for the new obedience of the gospel.

II. But we might imagine the conscience of man not to be enlightened at the outset of his religious earnestness; and that therefore, instead of the stillness of his despair under a sense of nature's insufficiency for the righteousness of the law, he actually sets forth in the pursuit of this righteousness, and makes the weary struggle it may be of months or of years in order to attain it. It is oftenest in this way that the first movements are made under the first powerful visitation of seriousness. The law in its unsullied purity—the law in its uncompromising rigour—the law in its unexcepted right of sovereignty over every desire of the heart and every deed of the history—these may not be adverted to at the time of the soul's incipient concern about these things; and so the attempt might fairly be made, to compass such an obedience as might found a claim or title to the rewards of eternity. In the prosecution of this object there may be the forthputting of great strenuousness—the anxious feeling of great scrupulosity—the new habit, at least of toiling at the servilities, if not the new heart which has a taste for the sanctities of religion. At all events, many laborious drudgeries may be gone through. The regularities both of private and family prayer may be instituted. There may be allotted hours for the exercises of sacredness; and these in full tale and measure may be observed most rigidly. In short, a thousand punctualities may be rendered—and all with the view to establish a merit in the eye of heaven's Lawgiver, which never can be effectually done without a full and faultless adherence to Heaven's law. Now, we say, that if conscience feel as it ought, there will throughout this whole process be a festering, an unappeasable disquietude—a self-jealousy, and a self-dissatisfaction which no doings or deserts of our own can terminate—a feeling of unworthiness which in spite of every effort will adhere to our best services, and turn all into hopelessness and vexation; for let it be observed, that reach what elevation of virtue we may, there will in proportion as we advance and we ascend be further heights and distances in moral excellence beyond us and above us. The higher we proceed in this career we shall command a further view of the spaces which still lie before us; or, in other words, we shall be more filled with a sense of the magnitude of our own shortcomings. The conscience in fact grows in sensibility just as the conduct is more the object of our strict and scrupulous regulation; and so, with every advance we make towards the perfection of the law, does the law appear to rise upon us with her exactions—and we feel as if more helplessly behind than at the outset of our enterprise. The presumptuous imagination of our sufficiency comes down when we thus bring it to the trial; and that impotency of which we were not aware at the outset, we are made experimentally to know and to feel. Meanwhile that is a sore drudgery in which we are implicated, and all the more fatiguing that it is so utterly fruitless—that the peace which we seek to realize by our obedience recedes at every step to a greater distance, because new heights of obedience are ever rising on the view, and baffling every effort to substantiate a valid plea for the rewards of immortality. This is that law work, of whose aspirations and toils and frantic unavailing struggles, like those of a captive to break loose from his prison hold or to scale the precipice which hems him, we read in the affecting history of so many a convert—whose awakend conscience only spoke to him in louder terms of reproach the more he did to appease its endless upbraidings, and whose every attempt to flee from the coming wrath made it glow the more fiercely upon his imagination. Not ten thousand punctualities of the outer conduct can purify a heart that is every day obtaining some fresh revelation of its own worthlessness, and which when brought to the touchstone of a spiritual law finds itself destitute of all right affection or affinity towards God. This is the grand failure. His hand can labour, but his heart cannot love; and after wasting and wearying himself in vain with the operose drudgeries of a manifold observation, he still finds that he is a helpless defaulter from the first and the greatest commandment.

Now, it is when thus harassed and beset among the impracticable obstructions which lie in the way of doing, that he finds the very outlet he stands in need of when the way of believing is opened to him. The righteousness which he has so ineffectually tried to make out in his own person has been already made out for him by another; and now lies for his acceptance, as a simple and unconditional offer which he is invited to lay hold of. The sin which hitherto has so hardened him with despondency and remorse, is now washed away by the blood of a satisfying expiation; and God in the gospel of Jesus Christ calls upon him to draw nigh, with the erect, the joyful confidence of one who never had offended. The Saviour has completely done for him what with so much of strenuousness but with so little of success he has been trying to do for himself; and he is warranted to step immediately into the hopes and the happiness of one, not merely reconciled to God, but vested with the same right to His favour, as if he had earned it by the worth of his own services, by the merit of his own full and faultless obedience. What a mighty enlargement when the title-deed to heaven, for which he had been stretching forward with many long and laborious efforts, till he at last sank down into exhaustion and despair, is put into his hand; and the gifted creature, now set loose from bondage and terror, exchanges the services of constraint for the willing services of a grateful and affectionate loyalty!

It is thus that the guiltiest of sinners, simply on believing the testimony which God hath given of His Son, is instated, and that immediately, in all the titles and privileges of a pure and perfect righteousness before the Lawgiver whom he has offended. He passes from death unto life. Individually he is freed from the penalties of sin, and judicially he is vested with an absolute right to the rewards of a full and finished obedience. The righteousness of Christ is reckoned to him, and he is dealt with accordingly. No wonder that the tidings of a salvation so marvellous should be so generally met by the incredulity of nature, opposed as it is to all the expectations and all the tendencies of nature, which, when awake to the concerns of another world at all, is ever prompting man to make good his own way to a blissful eternity, and that by a righteousness of his own. It is when delivered from the burden of this felt impossibility, that man breaks forth on a scene of enlargement; when in the secure possession of a right to heaven in the righteousness of his accepted surety, with all the alacrity of an emancipated creature whose bonds have been loosed, he proceeds to offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and to call on the name of the Lord.

And let us not be afraid lest this judicial salvation, if it may be thus termed—so full, so free, so competent to every sinner, however vile, if he but place his confident and unembarrassed reliance on it, so ready, nay so importunate for the acceptance of all, and that without the least distrust or delay on their part—let us not be afraid, lest this judicial salvation should not bring a moral salvation in its train, as if exemption from the penal consequences of sin were not to be followed up by exemption from the power wherewith, anterior to our reception of the gospel, it lorded over us. The great author of that economy under which we live will not leave any of its parts or any of its provisions unfulfilled upon us. He will sanctify as well as justify; and if we but trust in Christ, we shall be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who will superadd the personal to the judicial righteousness, and make us meet in character as well as meet in law for that heaven, the door whereof Christ hath opened to us—for the service of that glorious inheritance which He hath purchased by His obedience, and which is the fruit of the everlasting righteousness which Himself hath brought in.

LECTURE LXXX.

ROMANS X. 6-9.

"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

THIS passage in the Epistle to the Romans is taken from a similar one in the Book of Deuteronomy; and it has been made a question, whether it be strictly a quotation in the sense of its being applied by the two writers to one and the same subject, or if it be used only by Paul in the way of accommodation, and applied differently because related to an essentially different covenant from that which is spoken of by Moses. For the covenants being the same, it is argued that the words of the text as they occur in the Old Testament were not uttered on the occasion of that covenant which was made with the children of Israel at the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai, but years afterwards, and on the eve of their entrance into the land of Canaan—when the address containing the sentences from which our text is taken was delivered by Moses, and with the following prefatory announcement—"These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb" (Deut. xxix. 1). And certain it is, that in this latter covenant there are evangelical privileges held forth, and evangelical promises, which enter not into the description of that righteousness which is of the law, "That the man which doeth these things shall live by them." For we therein read of forgiveness to the penitent, "When thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, he will have compassion upon thee" (Deut. xxx. 2, 3)—and of regeneration, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. xxx. 6)—and not only of forgiveness, but of positive beneficence and favour, "For the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good" (Deut. xxx. 9). These perhaps may identify this latter of the Old Testament covenants with the covenant of peace and mercy under which we now live, and so identify the application of the words both as uttered by the Jewish legislator and by the Christian apostle to one and the same subject, even the gospel of Jesus Christ—leaving the distinction which there is in the righteousness of the law from the righteousness of faith to be exemplified and upholden by the earlier of these Hebrew covenants, even the covenant of Horeb—under which we have this promise of hopeless fulfilment, that 'the man who doeth these things shall live by them;' and this denunciation of terror and despair, universal because inclusive of the whole human race—"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all the words of the book of this law to do them."

But we must not spend further time in the settlement of this question. Whether the words of our text were employed both by Moses and Paul to characterize the same or two different economies, there is a common property ascribed by each to that one economy of which he is speaking. The condition upon which its blessings are suspended, and by the fulfilment of which these blessings will be realized, is not a distant and inaccessible secret—either imbedded in the fathomless depths below, or placed far out of sight among the unscaled heights of the firmament above us. "For this commandment," it is said by the founder of the old dispensation, "the commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. . . . But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deut. xxx. 11, 14). And in counterpart to this, it is said by the chief among the apostles in the new dispensation, "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; That if thou believe, thou shalt be saved."

But the great peculiarity in the verses of my text, and to which I would at present direct your more special attention, is the precise and particular object of the ascent and the descent respectively which are there spoken of by the apostle. These objects are different from that which is spoken of in the Book of Deuteronomy—where to bring the commandment or the word from afar, is the assigned purpose both of the imagined ascent into heaven, and of the imagined descent into the abyss or bottom of the sea. In the New Testament this is stated differently—the assigned purpose of the ascent being 'to bring Christ down from above,' and of the descent being 'to bring up Christ again from the dead.' It is still possible, notwithstanding this difference, that Moses and Paul may after all have been dealing with the same truth, and looking to the same quarter of contemplation—the first, as is customary in the Old Testament, giving utterance to a doctrine, but couched in enigma or shrouded in hazy obscuration; the second, as is customary in the New Testament, giving utterance to the identically same doctrine, but evolved from the dimness in which it lay hidden, and with the light of a clearer and broader manifestation thrown over it. However this may be, let us now hasten to our explanation of the verses here before us, and which we think fitted to throw a new and interesting light over the gracious economy that has been instituted for the salvation of our world.

In the parallel verses of Deuteronomy there seems no difficulty. The children of Israel are there simply told — that instead of having to seek afar or among remote and impracticable places for the rule of life, this rule, brought from heaven to their door, now stood within reach of one and all of them. The same could have been said of a law anterior to that of Moses, even the law of the heart—that voice within the breast, which is heard in the homestead of every human conscience, and gives forth lessons that serve, in part at least, for the guidance of all men. And the law of Moses, though brought from the heights of the upper sanctuary, might be said, as far at least as viewed in the generalities of its ethical system, to have placed itself in the hearts of those who heard it—responded to in all its great unchangeable principles by the light and the law of every man's conscience—thus finding a voucher, as it were, for its own truth and authority in every bosom—and in virtue of this its ready introduction to the innermost recesses of our moral nature, of the prompt and familiar recognition which it meets with there, so establishing and so accrediting itself as the rightful inmate of humanity all the world over, as both to warrant and explain the saying, that this word, framed though it was in the highest heavens, and thence brought down to the earth we live in, still this word is in thy heart. And then as to the ritual and the positive of this great religious directory, though it could awake no consenting testimony from within, and could therefore meet with no internal evidence to welcome or to own it—yet enforced as it was by every demonstration of authority from without, by the smoke and the thunder, nay, by the voice and all those signals of a present Deity, which convinced and overawed the thousands of Israel—we may well believe that the book written by Moses, and which recorded all the precepts whether ceremonial or judicial or moral, that were delivered to this great prophet in the converse which he held with God, and which also described all the usages and forms of their earthly service, conformably to the pattern showed him in the Mount, by which were represented the ministrations of the upper sanctuary, or things of the tabernacle in the heavens—that this book in all its contents, would be deferred to by the Hebrews of old, as the rightful and authoritative directory both of their solemn worship, and of their everyday conduct: And being read at stated seasons by the priests to the people, as well as read by parents to their children, whom they were strictly charged to teach diligently in the statutes of the Lord, it might well be said of this word that it was in their mouth, as well as in their heart. They had not to go abroad, as sages of old are said to have done, when they travelled in quest of wisdom. They had neither to search for it as for hid treasure in the depths of the earth, nor to pluck the secret from unseen or mysterious altitudes beyond the sky. It had been brought down from thence to Sinai, and imparted to Moses, and placed by him in a volume of little bulk within the reach and reading of every man; and so, passing into the hearts and homes of all the people, the word of life was thus made nigh unto them.

But the law has not given life—neither that law of the heart which is of universal obligation, its voice having been heard all the world over; nor that law of a written revelation proclaimed in the hearing of a special nation, to whom were committed the oracles of God. Be it the one or the other law, there is not a man who liveth on the face of the earth who has not fallen short of its righteousness. It has proved the ministration of a universal death—and that because of universal disobedience. It is not that the law fell short; but that man, the subject of the law, fell short. The rule of righteousness as given to him at the first was perfect. It is because of defects and deviations from that rule, that ruin, a universal ruin, has come upon our species; and another righteousness had to be devised, on the basis of which man might recover the blessings which he had forfeited, and be reinstated in that favour with God from which he had fallen. Such is the design of the gospel, or of that righteousness of faith which the gospel has made known to us; and our inquiry now is into the nature of that common property which has been claimed for this last as well as for a former revelation—insomuch that Paul could reiterate what Moses had substantially said before him—"But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

For our better understanding of these remarkable verses, and more especially of the two parentheses which are peculiar to this passage, there being no trace of them in the parallel passage of the older Scriptures—let me state in a few words what may be termed the two great steps or stages of that redeeming process by which man has been restored to that place of relationship with God which he now occupies. Man by transgression had done dishonour to the law of God; and we may learn or estimate the magnitude of the outrage from the magnitude of the steps which were taken for repairing it—even that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, had to descend from heaven; had to put on the shroud of humanity; had, during the whole period of a sinless yet suffering life, to sustain a mysterious conflict with the temptations and infirmities of our nature; and finally, had to take upon Himself the whole burden of the penal infliction to have been otherwise discharged on a rebellious world, by bowing down His head unto the sacrifice: and thus, as the fruit or final object of His descending movement, was He delivered for our offences. But this is not the whole amount of the boon He has achieved for us. There is something a great deal more than the cancelment of our debt, or blotting out of the sentence that was against us in the book of condemnation. He not only suffered, but He served. He not only absorbed for us the penalty of a wretched and undone, but He earned for us the reward of a blissful eternity. He who, to use the language of Daniel, "made an end of sins," also did more—"He brought in an everlasting righteousness." In other words, He not only worked out our legal release from the torments of a hideous and everlasting hell, He made good our rightful inheritance among the triumphs and the felicities of heaven—not only annulling but reversing our condition from that of the outcasts of a hopeless condemnation, the children of a wrath that was to come, to that of the expectants and the heirs of a coming glory. We are not able to discriminate among the various passages of His history, between the endurance by which He bore the chastisement of our peace, and the obedience by which He won for us the prize of immortality. But there is a real and substantive distinction between these two services—a distinction recognised in Scripture—between the pardon by which we cease to be reckoned with as sinners, and the justification by which we are reckoned and dealt with as positively righteous. And as the event of His death is clearly set forth as related to the one, that death being an atonement for sin—so the event of His resurrection, or rather of His re-admission into paradise, though not so frequently is yet clearly set forth as related to the other, that exaltation being conferred on Him as the reward of His obedience, by which He opened the door of heaven both for Himself and for His followers. It is thus that He who is said to have reconciled us by His death is also said by His life to have consummated our salvation. And thus if, as we have already said, the fruit or final object of His descending movement was His being delivered for our offences—so the fruit or final object of His ascending movement is His being raised again for our justification.

There are other passages in Scripture which intimate the same relation that we have now stated—between, on the one hand, the death and resurrection of our Saviour; and on the other, the two distinct points of that salvation (removal of the penalty, and a right by service to the positive reward) which He hath achieved for us, and by which He hath completed our title-deed to an entry and a purchased possession in the paradise of God. But that I may come at once to the lesson of our text, I would only now bid you think of these two great movements, from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, and of the illustrious Person who had to make them—ere the high demands of the divine jurisprudence could be fulfilled, or a way of access be again opened for guilty man to the Lawgiver whom he had offended. It was a question in the policy of heaven which angels desired to look into; and the highest wisdom as well as highest strength of these upper regions had to be put forth for its settlement. For this the Eternal Son had, from amid the wondering hosts of the celestial, to leave the bosom of His Father; and He whose forthgoings were of old even from everlasting, had to veil all His primeval glories in an earthly tabernacle; and when God manifest in the flesh, did He partake to the full in the infirmities of our assumed and associated nature; and beyond the ken of mortal eye, were there sufferings unknown of which we read a few mysterious outbreakings in the agonies of the garden; and unknown struggles too in still deeper passages of His history, as when He engaged in conflict with the forces of darkness, and spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly. And after a death of deep and dreadful endurance—an equivalent sacrifice for the guilt of a world, and a descent into the lower parts of the earth, the purpose whereof, from the imperfect glimpses which revelation gives of it, is to us an unsolved enigma—did the once crucified retrace His way to the position and pre-eminence which He at present occupies, of the now exalted Saviour; first by the reanimation of His body, then by His resurrection from the grave, then by His sublime ascension above the world, where He slowly withdrew from the gaze of chosen witnesses; and last of all by His entrance into heaven, and the assumption of His mediatorial place at the right hand of the Father—and that, we may well believe, amid the hosannas of an angelic host, who in numbers without number welcomed and did Him homage as the Author and Finisher of a mighty enterprise—even the enterprise by which He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in the merit and investiture of which the guiltiest sinners of our fallen, our dishonoured species may, without disparagement either to the law or to the Lawgiver, stand with acceptance before the throne of God. We ask you to ponder these things. Slighted, disregarded, scarcely recognised at all in the hazy atmosphere of earth—we ask you to think of the movement and the stir, if I may so express myself, which they made in heaven, and of the lofty estimation in which they are held by the intelligences there. Above all, keep a fast and firm hold of this consideration:—To reinstate our fallen world the Son of God had first to descend and die for sin; and then to ascend even to the place which He now occupies—where, as the fruit of the travail of His soul, He completes and effectuates our salvation.

With this fully in your mind we are in a fit condition both for your understanding and for our enforcement of the lessons in the text. And first, as a lesson of rebuke to those of whom we read in the preceding context, who, refusing to take up with this righteousness of God, vainly and presumptuously sought to establish a righteousness of their own. Other foundation, the Bible tells us, than that which is laid already can no man lay; but they, unchecked and unhumbled by any sense of their own utter impotency, labour with all their might to construct and lay over again a foundation of merit and of dependence for themselves. In other words, they would usurp the office of the Saviour; or, as if that office had been imperfectly fulfilled and left unfinished, they would lay aside His work and substitute their own work in its place—in the proud imagination that their own strength was commensurate to the mighty enterprise, that enterprise of toil and conflict and suffering and at length of triumph which brought Christ down from heaven, and brought Him up again from the deep and secret places of the earth. In despite of this great achievement, their constant inclination is for another basis of acceptance on which to lean than that which Christ hath so laboriously reared; or, as if to supersede and set at nought the plea of His righteousness—which alone is adequate to the dignity of Heaven's jurisprudence—would they thrust forward their own puny and polluted righteousness as being good enough for God. You may now understand the principle on which this self-dependence of man becomes so high an offence in the sight of Heaven. It implies the disparagement and the mockery of all that has been already done for the world's salvation. We read of Christ as the Captain of this salvation—and that He trode the wine-press alone—and that of the people there were none with Him. Say not then in thy heart that thou canst make atonement or amends for thine own disobedience—a work so arduous as to have brought down Christ from heaven for its achievement. And say not in thine heart that thou canst substantiate a right by thine own services to the rewards of immortality—a work of Christ's also, and for the victorious fulfilment of which He was brought up from the dead, and highly exalted to a place of advocacy and intercession at God's right hand, where even within the precincts of that august sanctuary of which justice and judgment are the habitation, He in the single strength of His own righteousness, can make good the claims of all who believe on Him. To turn from such a salvation as this, and labour for the achievement of it with one's own arm, is indeed to stumble at a stumblingblock. It is affronting to God. It is ruinous to man.

But this is not all. There is in this passage not only a lesson of rebuke to the proud, but the far kindlier and more congenial lesson, and the one we are most anxious to impress, a lesson of highest encouragement to the humble. For it is not always pride that actuates a man when he seeks to establish a right to heaven by his own righteousness. Apart from this, there is the natural legality of the human heart—a most natural imagination, and upheld by a thousand analogies in the transactions of man with man, that obedience is the work and heaven is the wages—the one the purchase-money, the other the purchase—related to each other like the counterpart terms of any contract or bargain in the numerous exchanges of human society. It is not always in the spirit of pride that the aspirant after salvation falls in with this conception and acts upon it. He simply thinks it the direct way of going to work, that he should try to earn God's favour by deserving it; and accordingly he labours to be right, and to be even with the law, and to bring up his conduct to the level, or rather to the high standard of its acquirements. But in very proportion to his sincerity, if his conscience be at all enlightened, the more he labours the more is he oppressed and borne down by a helpless sense of deficiency—heavy-laden under the weight of his past delinquencies, and wearied by efforts alike fruitless and fatiguing, to recover his unmeasurable distance from God's lofty commandment. It is when thus toiling in pursuit of impossibilities, that the true understanding of these verses, as if by the letting in of light into his mind, dissipates every cloud, and at once releases him from his anxieties and fears. Let him only learn that the identical enterprise at which he now labours as in the very fire, the only-begotten, the Son of the everlasting Father, Himself the Mighty God and Prince of Peace, hath already put His hand to; and left not off till, in the triumph of its full consummation, He cried out that it was finished. He first had to descend from heaven, that He might become sin for us, and in our nature bear the punishment that we should have borne; and then did ascend into heaven, having by His obedience unto death completed the titles of entry and inheritance there both for Himself and for all His followers—and so that, in the merit and acceptance of His high service, we might become the righteousness of God. Let the weary and the heavy-laden sinner but submit to this righteousness and be at rest—nor seek to establish for himself, that which cost the incarnation of our crucified, and has been rewarded by the exaltation of our risen Saviour. And thus would we explain these parenthetic clauses. Strength to do the thing implies a strength to wield the alone instrument that was adequate for the doing of it. I can no more make atonement for my own guilt, than I could have ascended into heaven and thence brought down Christ from above who has poured out His soul unto the death for me. I can no more earn or establish my own right to the high rewards of eternity, than I could have descended into the deep, and thence brought up Christ again from the dead, who, in virtue of that everlasting righteousness which Himself alone hath fulfilled, was raised to the Mediatorial throne which He now occupies, and from which He welcomes the approaches of all, and casts out none who come unto Him. Let me say not in my heart then, that there is a strength in me commensurate to the work which called for either the one or the other of these movements; but dismissing the vain imagination, let me forthwith rejoice that it is a work no longer to do, because already done—that it is a work which has already passed through such able hands, even those of Him who travailed in the greatness of His strength for the full and finished performance of it—that a ready-made righteousness is now looking down upon me from heaven, made to my hand, and which I am simply invited to lay hold of—that personally and practically, my concern now is not with the doing, but with the report of the doing—not with a work which is far above my reach, but with a word which is nigh unto me, and in which with the felt helplessness and docility of a little child, my only part is to acquiesce—a word now standing at the door, and soliciting admittance from every one of us; and which, when once it finds entrance into the home of a believer's heart, makes good his interest in the whole of this wondrous salvation.

The question and the remonstrance now held with the men of our fallen race is not, Who of you hath made good the righteousness of the law; but "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

We can at present expatiate no further on this high topic, but will conclude with a brief reply to one question which may have been suggested in the course of these explanations. If salvation, it may be asked, is brought so nigh and made so free to us, might not all exertion on our part cease? or if the righteousness of Christ be thus made to supersede the righteousness of man, then under such an economy as this, what place for human virtue is to be found? We answer, that all exertion for the object of establishing a valid and unchallengeable right, or of making good a judicial claim, or claim in law to the kingdom of heaven, ought to cease; and that because human virtue has no place in the title-deed, or forms no part of the price and purchase-money by which that glorious inheritance has been earned for us. But if to be meet in law is indispensable for our entry into paradise, to be meet in character is alike indispensable; and though for the former, or the legal meetness, human virtue is of no possible avail, for the latter, or the personal meetness, human virtue is all in all. The truth is, that the doctrine of our justification, our forensic justification by faith, so far from acting as a drag or discouragement on the virtue of man, sets him at large, as if by the removal of an incubus, for the busy cultivation of all its graces, for the diligent performance and discharge of all its services. So long as the endeavour or the task was to bring up his obedience to the standard of the jurisprudence of heaven, and so as at once to meet all the demands, and clear all the penalties of God's high and incommutable law, the burden of a felt impossibility weighed him down to inactivity and despair. But when told that the work on which in vain he might have wreaked and wasted all his energies is already done—in other words, when told of the complete atonement and perfect righteousness of Christ—human virtue is not overborne or extinguished thereby; it is only turned away from the fulfilment of an object by itself impracticable, but now achieved in another way, and set forth on that more hopeful career along which it presses forward by successive footsteps from grace to grace, till it appears perfect before God in Zion. Man could not, in the strength of his own energies, either implement the obligations of God's perfect, and far less sustain so as to liquidate the penalties of God's violated law. But man with the aids of the all-powerful and regenerating Spirit can advance, and that indefinitely, his own holiness. The righteousness of faith, so far from operating as an extinguisher on the righteousness of works, affords the only opening by which, under the impulse of gratitude, and the inspiration of a heaven-born hope, to enter with alacrity and comfort on the labours of a new obedience. "I am thy servant, I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds: I will offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows now unto the Lord in the presence of all his people." Justification is not the landing-place of Christianity;

it is but the commencement, or the starting-post, where the emancipated children of love and liberty break forth on all the activities of a willing service. And so in our text, confession with the mouth is joined as the inseparable accompaniment to faith in the heart—such a confession as many of you witnessed yesterday *—only, however, a good confession, if your walk and conversation afterwards be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" If the main lesson I have tried to expound be understood and acted on, you will "hold fast your confidence and the rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." In one word, let me follow it up by the lesson of another scripture: "Be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

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* Delivered on the day after a Communion Sabbath.

LECTURE LXXXI.

ROMANS X. 10-13.

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Before entering on the consideration of these verses, we would briefly advert to one lesson, which, if not contained in the passage that we have just left, has at least been suggested by it. To bring Christ down from above, or to bring Him up from the dead, would be to present Him to the view of the senses, and make Him an object of sight—after which there could be no doubt of His resurrection. One of the common and current aphorisms which we hear most frequently is, that seeing is believing; yet though thus identified, there is a distinction made in Scripture between them. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, faith is defined as the assurance of things not seen. A belief through the medium of the senses is differently regarded, and we may add far less valued than a belief in a testimony—belief in the word—belief in what prophets "have spoken" (Luke xxiv. 25). It is thus that after His resurrection He upbraids those disciples, not who believed Him not after they had seen, but who believed not the report of those who had seen Him (Mark xvi. 14). It was on this principle, too, that He valued less the faith of Thomas, after he had at length given way under the power of an ocular demonstration. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." When faith supports itself under the want of sensible helps and accompaniments—then it is that the "trial of it is precious"—when, though not seeing Christ, yet we love Him: and in whom, "though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i. 8). We meet with the same high estimate of faith in many other places—that is, when it is faith in the naked word, faith without the aid of vision, the faith which maintains its strength and constancy against even the likelihoods of nature and experience, which simply reckons that what God hath said is true, and is "fully persuaded that what he hath promised, he is able also to perform" (Rom. iv. 21).

Now there is another, a third way, in which an absent thing might be viewed by us—not as an object of sight, for we are supposing it so separate or removed as to be unseen by us—neither as an object of faith; but as an object of conception, an act often conjoined with faith, yet perfectly distinct from it—so distinct as to be referred by certain mental philosophers to a special power or faculty of its own. One might conceive a thing without any belief in its reality; and on the other hand, though one can scarcely believe without some conception of the object of faith, yet may that conception be so dull and languid and hazy, as almost to justify the expression of our believing in the dark. We should like you to discriminate between a belief in a thing and the conception of that thing. You may believe not only in the existence of an absent friend, but in the reality and warmth of his intense affection for yourself; and this belief may be as strong to-morrow as it is to-day—and yet it is possible, that your conception of all this may not be so lively or strong to-morrow as it is to-day. His benignant smile, his looks of graciousness, his whole countenance and manner and tones of voice, bespeaking the utmost cordiality and kind affection—these may all tell more vividly on the imagination at one time than another; and in proportion to the vivacity and force wherewith they are thus presented and pictured forth as it were to the eye of the mind, will the spirits be exhilarated, and the whole man experience an animation and a comfort as he dwells on a contemplation which the conceiving faculty has made for the time so bright and joyful to him. Now it must be obvious to the experience of all that this conception flits and fluctuates as if dependent on the ever-varying mood of the spirit—at one time gleaming forth towards the vivacity of sense, and at another fading, in deeper and deeper shades of obscuration, almost onward to extinction and utter vacancy. But the remarkable thing to be observed is, that, under all these varieties of conception, the faith may remain invariable, a constant quantity as it were, an element which abideth steadfastly and substantially the same amid all those changing hues which affect the colour or representation of the object, but do not in the least affect our belief in its reality. There may be a dimness in the contemplation, without the slightest mixture of a doubt in the object contemplated. The man never lets go his confidence in his friend —though, just as this power of conception is in languid or vigorous exercise, he may sometimes have greater and sometimes less degrees of sensible comfort in the contemplation of his friendship.

What is true of an earthly friend is true of our Friend in heaven. He is far removed out of sight, but may become the object of faith through the word that is nigh unto us. And He may also become the object of conception, which is a sort of substitute for sight, brightening and clearing as it sometimes does towards the vivacity of a sensible demonstration. But let us never forget that as faith without sight is all the more pleasing to God in that it subsists on its own unborrowed strength without the aid of the senses—so may faith be in the absence of any lucid or enlivening conception, having nothing to sustain it but the simple credit which it gives to the word of the testimony. Yet we hold these bright and exhilarating views of the Saviour to be unspeakably precious—the manifestation of which He Himself tells us (John xiv. 21)—a most refreshing cordial to the spirit of a believer: and of which we have no doubt that, if analysed into its ingredients, it will be found that it consists not merely in the greater force of evidence wherewith we are made to behold the Saviour, but in the quickening facility and power of conception wherewith we are enabled to set Him more vividly or impressively before us. Nevertheless we should distinguish between the conception and the faith—because while the one may be a minister of sensible comfort, it is the other which is the guarantee of our salvation. The man who, to repair the insufficiency of the word, would bring down Christ from heaven, only exemplifies the man who, as if to make up for the same insufficiency, strains but ineffectually to frame some graphical or picturesque idea of Him there. The danger is, that he may compass himself about with sparks of his own kindling, or walk in the light of his own fancy or his own fire. Let him keep then determinedly by the word which is nigh, rather than by the imagery wherewith he peoples the distinct and lofty places which are away from him. He who has conception but not faith, will at length lie down in sorrow. He who has faith, but from the want of conception walketh in darkness and has no light, is still bidden trust in the *name* of God and stay upon His word. He who conceiveth may have sensible comfort; but, with or without this, he who believeth is safe (Isa. i. 10, 11).

Faith and conception may be so disjoined that the one may be strong, and never give forth a stronger exhibition of itself than when the other, faint and feeble, is utterly unable to figure aught of the unseen and eternal things which are above. It may trust in the name of the Lord, even when the Lord Himself is shrouded in darkness from its view. It may stay upon God, even when the light of God's endearing and paternal countenance is not shining in its wonted force of manifestation upon the soul. The light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ may be hid for a season in deepest obscuration—yet during the whole of that season may the spiritual mourner, even in the midst of heaviness and discomfort, be fixed and settled on the certainties of the word; and this he may prove, if not by the raptures of a seraph, at least by the obedience of a servant—evincing by the toils and the sufferings and the sacrifices of his daily and devoted walk, that he can stake the world and every interest he has in it on the truth of Christ, that he could give up all for Him, that he could die for Him.

Yet while the primary and most essential requisite is our belief in the objects of faith, let us not undervalue the enjoyment and the spiritual good which lie in the luminous conception of them. Conception may lead astray, bringing us into converse with mere things of fancy. But conception deals with the true as well as the fictitious, brightening and enhancing our view of unseen realities, and thus bringing us into clearer and more intimate converse with the things of faith. To be gifted with such a faculty, even to be visited though only at times and intervals with such illumination, is an inestimable privilege to the Christian wayfarer—as conveying to his soul the glimpses and foretastes of his coming glory in heaven, and so yielding him a refreshment and strength for the fatigues of his journey through this lower world. There is a felt ecstasy in this transcendental light, like that which the apostles experienced when they beheld the transfiguration of our Saviour, and exclaimed, It is good to be here! How to attain or find our way to this light is a question therefore of deepest practical interest to all who make a real business of their eternity; nor are we aware of aught more interesting in the economy of the gospel than that connexion which it reveals between the plain duties of the Christian life and the highest attainments—be it in grace or in knowledge—of the Christian experience. The way to get at the light after which we aspire, is to work for it. It is to deal aright with the word which is nigh unto us, and to do aright with the things which are nigh unto us. Whatever the sublime mysteriousness may be of those higher manifestations which shine on the soul of the advanced Christian, there is no mystery in the initial footsteps of the path which leads to them. It is not by the transcendental flights of an imagination labouring to realize Christ in heaven, and failing as signally in the enterprise as if the attempt had been to bring Christ down from heaven. It is by a humbler but more solid pathway—an everyday walk with God in the bidden obedience of the gospel—that path of the upright which as the shining light shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*

Ver. 10.—'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Because in the Old Testament passage whence the quotation is taken, Moses makes mention both of the heart and mouth, Paul does the same, attributing to each such functions as are severally proper to them—as belief to the heart and confession to the mouth. It is true that by our modern idea the heart is the seat of the affections; and we should ascribe belief rather to the mind, which with us is the seat of the intellect: And hence the inference of many commentators is, that the belief of the New Testament—unlike to what it is in the common sense of the term,—is a thing of feeling as well as mere faith; and that the consent of the will as well as of the judgment, formed a constituent part of it. We, however, are more inclined to think that the ancients, whether Hebrew or Greek, did not proceed on the discriminations of our recent philosophy; and that the heart with them being equivalent to the whole of the inner man, might be the seat of all that proceeded therefrom, and so both of the emotions and the intellect—and this without merging the two into one, although they should emanate from the same fountain; and so we read of men understanding with their heart, nay of laying up in their hearts (Luke i. 66)—making the heart the seat of memory, even as is done by ourselves in the vulgar phrase of 'learning by heart.' Still, in point of just and sound metaphysics, we hold faith to be an act of the understanding alone;

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* For scriptural intimations of this connexion between duty and discernment, see John xiv. 21; Acts v. 32; Matt. vi. 22; Matt. xxv. 29; Isa. lviii. 5-9; Psalm cxix. 100; xxv. 14; L. 23.

and that though affection may be both an immediate cause, and as immediate a consequent of the same, it is never properly an ingredient thereof. We confess ourselves not partial to this confounding of the various functions and faculties of the mind which are really distinct from each other; and we confess our preference for the views of those who conceive of faith that however it may have sprung beforehand from the desirousness of a heart visited with moral earnestness, and prompting both to prayer and to inquiry; or however it may issue afterwards in the feelings and desires of holiness—yet that faith in itself is an act of the mind, purely intellectual—the judging of certain testimonies or certain propositions that they are true, the simple credence of such statements as are laid before us. We fear of any view different from this, that it tends to embarrass or to darken the freeness of the gospel salvation—while the view that we contend for is the only one which does full honour to the grace of God as all in all, and is at the same time eminently subservient to the practical righteousness as well as comfort of the believer. Though faith should be regarded as belief and nothing else, this is not to hinder but that it may have originated in a virtuous or good affection, or that the affections and deeds of virtue may follow abundantly in its train.

'For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.' Yet neither is it the personal but the judicial righteousness that is here spoken of—the righteousness of faith—that righteousness which is unto all and upon all who believe—not the righteousness here which is wrought in us by the Spirit; but that righteousness of Christ which is reckoned to us, and in virtue of which we are invested with that right to heaven which He by His obedience hath won for us, or are presented with a part and a lot in that inheritance which He purchased in behalf of a guilty world. It becomes ours on believing. We believe unto righteousness—this righteousness being the object in which our faith terminates, the landing-place to which it carries us.

'And with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' The apostle proceeds from an inward sentiment to the expression or manifestation thereof in an outward act; and such an act, as, *in those days*, was, very generally speaking, the sufficient token or pledge of a universal obedience. For then it held preeminently true, that he who confessed Christ forsook all, gave up all, made surrender or (which, as a manifestation of principle, was equivalent thereto) exposed himself to the surrender and loss of all, by following after Christ. We read, "that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue" (John ix. 22); and this was but a specimen or sample of that larger excommunication which every man underwent, or at least hazarded, in the act of becoming an ostensible and declared Christian—an excommunication from all that was dear to nature—becoming liable thereby not merely to be put out of the synagogue, but to be put out of society; to incur the loss of all which he had; to renounce or be renounced, to forsake or be forsaken of house and brethren and sisters and father and mother and wife and children and lands, yea, of his own life also, for the sake of Christ and of His gospel. No wonder, then, that confession was so honoured in these days, it being the exponent in fact and symbol of a universal discipleship. It gave evidence, that even as Christ suffered in the flesh, so these ready and resolved followers of His had armed themselves likewise with the same mind—and prepared not only to suffer in the flesh but to cease from sin, "that they should no longer live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1 Pet. iv. 1, 2). Well may it be said of every spirit who thus confesses Jesus Christ, that he is of God; and we may now understand, whenever such a confession is meant, how no man could say that Jesus was the Lord but by the Holy Ghost. All who were so actuated were in full readiness to drink of the cup which Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism—that baptism of deep affliction—which He was baptized with; and we may well conceive of this fixity of principle and purpose, that, impossible to mere nature, it could not be attained unto but through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The confession of these days in fact, as being the best evidence and pledge of a man's sincerity, was an effectual guarantee for his good works as well as his good words; and was therefore held in as great honour and demand as was obedience itself. And as we read of those unworthy disciples who in works denied God—so we may learn from this expression that by works too we may confess Him; and though it be only the confession of the mouth that is spoken of in our text, yet when we consider the actuating spirit in which it originates, we are not to wonder though the same high ascriptions should be given to it as we find given to the conformity of the whole man with the will of God and the prescriptions of the gospel. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is heaven." It was because of their confessing Christ that they had to endure a great fight of afflictions; but he that maintained his steadfastness notwithstanding, had the truth of our text literally fulfilled upon him. The confession he made was unto salvation—for "he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22).

Understanding then, that, for reasons now given, confession was placed in the same rank, and had the same powers and consequences ascribed to it with general obedience—it follows, that the apostle who tells us so often throughout his writings that we are saved by faith, in effect tells us at this place that we are saved by works. You must all have heard of the alleged contrariety between Paul and James upon this subject; but here there appears to be almost as strange a seeming contrariety between Paul and himself—not a real opposition of course in either instance, but the mere semblance of one, and which has been so often and so successfully disposed of by the explanations of those who undertake to effect a reconciliation, as they term it, between the two apostles, that we shall not at present repeat any of them. We shall only call attention to a distinction in the language of the apostle, when he expresses the several effects of faith upon the one hand, and of confession upon the other. When man believeth, it is unto righteousness—whereas when he confesseth, or confession is made by him, it is unto salvation; and understanding righteousness, as it unquestionably ought to be in this place, in its forensic or legal meaning, we learn from the first clause of the verse before us, that by faith we are justified—while, understanding confession as the equivalent of a universal obedience, we are told in the second clause that by works we are saved. The truth is, that justification and salvation are not perfectly synonymous. The former is part of the latter, but not the whole of it. To complete one's salvation, there must be deliverance from the power of sin as well as from its punishment; and accordingly, while reconciled by the death of Christ, "we are saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10)—that is, because He lives, we shall live also; or because He hath overcome, we shall overcome also; or because of the grace dispensed upon us from the hands of a risen Saviour, He, through the work of His Spirit in us, effectuates our sanctification—even as by His work in the flesh for us, He hath effectuated our acceptance with God. In like manner, if no man in these days could say that Jesus is the Lord but by the power of the Holy

Ghost, then to be saved by the confession of the text, which is really tantamount to our thus saying, is to be saved by the operation of this heavenly agent — in perfect keeping with another declaration of the apostle, when he tells us that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 11.—'For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.' That is either—First, shall not be ashamed by the non-fulfilment of that which is the object of their confident expectation. It is a confidence which they might well cherish and avow—secure as they are from the mockery of any failure or disappointment in their hopes. All the promises of God in Christ Jesus are yea and amen; and it is because of their certain and punctual accomplishment, that the hope which they inspire is a hope 'which maketh not ashamed' (Rom. v. 5). When the verse is regarded in this view, its reference is to the distant future—not to the time past when the promises were made, not even to the present time when the promises are believed, but to that future time when in act and by performance the promises will all be made good. When found in very truth that the glory now only revealed, and looked forward to but in perspective or by anticipation, is fully realized, then will the believer lift up his head and rejoice. Otherwise, ashamed of the vain and illusory imagination on which he had before rested, he would sink into despair.

Or, secondly, the text may be understood in reference to the present time, when the promises are only as yet believed, and the fulfilment of them is still in reserve. Even at this earlier stage might faith have a present and powerful effect in repressing shame, and more especially the shame of making the avowal of itself, and so of testifying for Christ. Like every other principle of strong and felt urgency within, it may delight in the vent and forthgoing of its own utterance, and in bearing down the restraints whether of shame or of fear which might have otherwise intercepted the expression of it. "I believed, therefore have I spoken" (Ps. cxvi. 10). "My heart was hot within me; and the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue" (Ps. xxxix. 3). "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34). These verses point not to the future vindication and triumph of our faith by the verification of its object, but to the present antagonism and victory, so to speak, of the principle of faith over the principle of shame—as exemplified by our Saviour, who, for the joy that was set before Him, but was only yet in prospect, endured the cross and also despised the shame. Thus too the apostle was not ashamed, and that because of the certainty he felt in Him whom he believed, and the firm persuasion he had of his ability to save him. And so he bids Timothy not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, who Himself tells us that whosoever shall be ashamed of Him and of His words, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father. It is therefore a present feeling, a present sensibility, that is spoken of in all these passages; and of which it is required that in the strength of our faith it should be overruled, and not given way to. We like this view of the text. It binds so together the belief of its first clause with the confession of its second—making them, if not so identical, at least so inseparable, as fully to explain the common virtues or common effects which are ascribed to each of them; and fully to harmonize the saying that 'confession is unto salvation,' with the saying, that "the end of our faith is the salvation of our souls" (1 Pet. i. 9).

From the proposition of this verse, a certain converse proposition might be drawn, that might well be used as a criterion by which to test and to ascertain the reality of our faith. If it be true that whosoever believeth on Him is not ashamed, then it should be true that whosoever is ashamed of Him doth not believe. Or, in the terms of the preceding verse, Whosoever maketh not confession of Him with the mouth, believeth Him not with the heart. How comes it then, that Christ and all which is expressly Christian, are so habitually and systematically excluded from society as topics of conversation? What shall we say, even of those who are denominated the professing people, what shall we say of their silence on the sacred themes of the soul and the Saviour and eternity, amid the companionships of this world? When do we ever meet with the free and copious utterance that would flow from the mouth on these subjects, if only the heart was full of them? The general emigration of a whole neighbourhood from one country to another in this world, would be the constant talk of all its parties and throughout all its families for months before the embarkation, and while the busy work of preparations and outfits was going on. How is it that we meet with nothing like this on the subject of that universal emigration from one world to another, which, by successive transportations across the dark valley and shadow of death, will so surely and in so short a time overtake the whole of our living population? Is it because there are no outfits, no preparations, and therefore no prospects to talk about?—these having no place in the converse, just because they have no place in the business or in the hearts of men. They are seldom or never the subjects of speech, just because they are seldom or never the subjects of thought. Or if there be any who think of them, but are ashamed to speak of them—such we say is the overbearing magnitude of the interest at stake, that it needs but a realizing sense of them to put to flight both the fear and the shame of this world. The engrossing affection of the great and the one thing needful would displace and subordinate every inferior affection of our nature; and, on the other hand, the total want of a practical earnestness or concern therein, as evinced by the tenor and talk of almost every company, might well justify the question—Verily, is there such a thing as faith upon the earth?

Ver. 12, 13.—'For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But even a universal apostasy or unbelief would not make the faith of God to be of no effect. He is true, though every man should be a liar; and the precious truth announced in these verses invests with an ample warrant the messengers of salvation, who might go forth the bearers of a full and unexcepted commission, to assail even a whole world lying in wickedness and unconcern, by plying with the overtures of a free salvation, each and every individual of the great human family. God, it is said here, makes no difference between the Jew and the Greek; and there are some who, in defending the articles of their own scientific theology, would make the universality of the gospel offer lie in this—that, now when the middle wall of partition is broken down, it might be offered to men of every nation. But the Scriptural theology carries the universality farther down than this—and so as that the gospel might be offered, not merely to men of every nation, but to each man of every nation. God is not only no respecter of nations, He is no respecter of persons. It is not only whatsoever nation shall call on the name of the Lord that shall be saved; but whatsoever man of that nation shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved. We are not now probing into the depths of the Almighty's government, or speculating on the counsels of a predestinating God. But on the authority of these verses, we are attempting to give forth the plain and palpable duties of every minister and every hearer—which is, for the former to knock at every single door, and crave admittance for the gospel into every single heart, making an honest, and in the most obvious sense of the term, a real tender of salvation to every man; and for the latter to respond with the same honesty and in full confidence, to the call that has been thus sounded in his hearing—so that his call back again shall not be of words merely. For as the confession which availeth is not with the mouth only, but proceedeth from faith in the heart, so the call which availeth is not one of utterance only, but proceedeth from desirousness in the heart; and whosoever so calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

LECTURE LXXXII.

ROMANS X. 14-21.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First. Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."

The gospel should be preached to every creature—it being a universal message from heaven to earth, co-extensive with the species; and not only to be carried forth over all, but to be pressed on the specific acceptance of each. A commission thus universal should have had at our hands a universal fulfilment; but we have only to open our eyes, and see how palpably short it has come of this—both internally or within the limits of Christendom, and externally or abroad and over the face of the world. And yet we affect to wonder, as if it were something mysterious and inscrutable, at the partiality of the Divine government, in having limited the blessings of the Christian religion to so small a portion of the human family. Before carrying the reproach so far upward, we had better first take account of our own immediate share in it; and deal with the proximate cause of this phenomenon, ere we take cognisance of any of its remote and anterior causes. We complain of a limited Christianity, but there was no limit in the terms of that commission which was put into our hands at the outset of this dispensation—and that in the form of a precept, Go, and promulgate this gospel everywhere; accompanied with a promise, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It is not time to charge the Almighty, or to arraign the methods of His administration, till we have inquired in how far this precept has been carried into operation; and then what the instances are in which, when the precept was fully acted up to, this promise has ever been withheld. Man's prone and precipitate inclination is to reckon with his God, and to leave unsettled all the while that reckoning which we ought first to hold with ourselves—a transgression this both of piety and of sound philosophy—it being the dictate of each, instead of speculating on His part in the matter, which is secret and belongs unto Him, fully to examine how we stand acquitted of our own part, which is revealed, and belongs to us and to our children.

Ver. 14, 15.—'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' These verses give the first answer, the answer which is readiest and most within reach, to the question—How is it that the whole earth is not Christianized? God could, by an exercise of power and unlimited sovereignty, achieve this result at the instant bidding of His voice—even as on the first day of creation, He said, Let there be light, and there was light. But God hath, in the exercise of a wisdom to us perhaps inscrutable, yet in perfect analogy with the many thousand processes of nature and providence, chosen to ordain an instrumentality for the diffusion of the Christian religion over the world. Now, it so happens that men are component parts, nay the chief parts of this instrumentality; and we should first inquire how they have done their part, so as to ascertain whether it be not we men who are in fault, before daring to lay the fault upon God.

It is a sound doctrinal theology which acknowledges, amid the countless diversity of operations around us, that it is God who worketh all in all. But God worketh by means; and when a certain prescribed human agency enters into that system of means which He hath instituted, it is a sound practical theology to labour as assiduously in the bidden way as if man worked all. It is one of the highest points of Christian wisdom to combine the utmost dependence on God with the utmost diligence in the prosecution of all those activities which He Himself hath appointed—insomuch that though the Holy Spirit be the undoubted agent of every conversion, Paul held it no infringement on orthodoxy to say as much as that, under our present economy, the conversion of the world, without the instrumentality of men, is impossible. 'How shall they believe unless they hear? How shall they hear without a preacher? How shall they preach except they be sent?' He himself was converted by a direct communication from heaven, apart from all converse with flesh and blood, receiving the gospel not of man nor taught by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ—yet none more strenuous than he in affirming the necessity of human co-operation in the great work of evangelizing the world. Not but that he imagined, in every instance as well as in his own, that faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God; and that even when conveyed by the preaching of one man into the mind of another, it is but the pouring from one earthen vessel to another of a treasure which had come down from heaven—so that whenever in any age or country of the world that precious faith which is unto salvation is deposited in any heart, it is established by a supernatural agency, and standeth there not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. It is for Him, however, and not for us, to make choice of His own pathway for the conveyance of His own blessings, and the propagation of His own spiritual influences into the souls of men; and if He choose to make one man His vehicle for the transference of light and grace into the heart of another, it is the part of him whom He has thus selected as His instrument, to labour with all his might and assiduity in the sacred duties of that vocation whereto he has been called. This preference for the agency of men in the work of Christianization is conspicuous in every age of the Church, and at no time more than in the first age, even though it was the period of miracles and supernatural visitations. We have often looked on the history of the conversion of Cornelius as a striking illustration of this. God could have worked a saving faith in the heart of Cornelius, by an immediate suggestion from His own Spirit, or through the mouth of an angel. And He did send an angel to Cornelius, not however that he might preach the gospel to him, but that he might bid him send for Peter, and receive that gospel at the lips of a fellow-mortal. And God also sent to Peter a communication from heaven to prepare him for the message—thus doubling, as it were, the amount of miraculous agency, in order that the gospel might be heard by a yet unconverted child of Adam, not through the medium of a supernatural and angelic, but through the medium of a natural and a human utterance; yet not so that the natural should supersede or displace the supernatural—for while Peter spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard. The function of Peter was the same with that of a minister or missionary in the present day—it was to tell Cornelius the words by which he and all his house should be saved. And the function of the Holy Ghost for the purpose of giving demonstration and efficiency to the word, is the same now as ever—He falls on us still even as He did on them at the beginning. Let no man put asunder the things which God hath joined; but let all in deed and in performance strive mightily for the spread and prevalence of the gospel on the earth, and give no rest to God in prayer, that by His grace He might work in them mightily.

The application of all this to the question of missions, whether home or foreign, is quite obvious. Let these be multiplied to the uttermost, so as to fill up all the vacancies which are within, or to spread abroad over all the mighty spaces which are beyond the limits of Christendom. Yet all will be useless and effete, if unblest or unaccompanied by the Spirit of God. Some there are, men of devotion, like many perhaps of the Puritanic age, who have a contempt for machinery, and who think to succeed by prayer alone in the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom. Others there are, men of bustle and enterprise, like many perhaps of our present age, who live, if not in the contempt, at least in the neglect of supplication, and think to succeed in the work of Christian philanthropy by the busy prosecution of those schemes and societies which have recently sprung up in the religious world. Neither will do singly—neither the human instrumentality alone without the agency from above, nor yet the celestial agency, which refuses to come forth save through an earthly apparatus which itself prescribes, and to the working of which it gives all its vitality and all its vigour. Without the conjunction of these, both the men of prayer and the men of performance will fall short of the object which their hearts are set upon. He who knows rightly to divide, or rather, rightly to compound the word of truth, knows how to conjoin these, and so gives himself wholly, not to prayer alone, or to the ministry of the word alone, but like the apostles of old, to prayer and the ministry of the word. The one sets up and works a machinery upon earth—the other brings down from heaven that inner element which actuates the movements, and imparts to them all their living energy. It is to this prolific union of devout and desirous hearts with busy hands, that the Church of Christ stands indebted for all its prosperity, in those seasons of gracious revival, when the frequent and earnest preaching of the word has been preceded or accompanied by a spirit of frequent and importunate prayer. Thus alone can the word of God be caused mightily to grow and to prevail—be it in a household, or a parish, or an empire, or through the world at large.

'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' Nothing can exceed the admirable tact and sagacity wherewith Paul adapts his argument to the tastes and partialities of those with whom he at the time is holding converse. In an upright and honourable sense he was all things to all men. To the Greeks he was a Greek—as in his address to the people of Athens, when he quoted from their own poets, and reasoned with them from the mythology of their nation; and to the Jews he was a Jew—as in the passage before us, in which we can discern the same principle of accommodation—as indeed in all his recorded addresses to the men of that nation, when he never fails to quote abundantly from their own prophets, and to reason with them out of their own Scriptures. And the quotation before us seems eminently fitted to subserve what was evidently a great object with Paul throughout the whole of this epistle—that of reconciling his countrymen to the admission of the Gentiles into a religious equality with themselves. It is taken from one of their most illustrious writers, to whom they could not turn back, without reading in almost immediate contiguity with the passage to which he refers them, of the salvation of the Gentiles along with the comfort of their own people and the redemption of Jerusalem. "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations (Gentiles); and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isa. lii. 7, 9, 10, 15.) But how could they behold that salvation—or, to understand their seeing in the mental sense of the term, how could they believe in it, unless they were told of it, unless it was preached to them, unless messengers were sent to them as well as to God's peculiar and favoured people? In other words, as the Gentiles were under the gospel economy to be made partakers of the same faith, and so of the same high privileges with themselves, and as they could not believe without hearing, nor hear without a preacher—it was necessary that the message of life should be propounded to them also: and thus he vindicates his own peculiar apostleship, in that he was commissioned as a chosen vessel to bear the tidings of salvation before the Gentiles as well as the children of Israel.

Ver. 16, 18-21.—'But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? . . . But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' We have already said that ere we charge God with partiality in that the blessings of the Christian religion are so limited, we should first acquit ourselves of the universal commission to go and make a tender of these blessings to every creature under heaven, and so make trial of the promise which accompanies this injunction—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." But ere we bring this experiment to anything like a full and finished completion, we are anticipated by a decisive fact, and from which we know beforehand, that though the gospel were preached to all, and by competent messengers too, sent forth by God Himself—yet that all would not receive it. It had been so preached in many distinct neighbourhoods even by prophets and inspired apostles—yet without effect upon many, who heard but did not believe. It was prophesied by Esaias, that all should not obey the gospel, even though brought to their doors, or though reported to them, and so placed within the reach of their hearing it. 'Lord, who hath believed our report?' Or, who hath believed the hearing which they have heard of us? The word translated 'report' in this verse is the same with that translated 'hearing' in the next.

There could be no mistake then as to their hearing. 'But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily.' He might have given historical proof of this by quoting his own experience and that of his colleagues in the apostleship—who had so often in the past course of their ministry lifted their testimony in the hearing both of countrymen and others who rejected it—to whom they preached the gospel, which, though to some it was the savour of life unto life, was to many the savour of death unto death.

But in order to trace the line of continuity in this whole passage, we must look to the verses more in connexion with each other.

Ver. 16-21.—'But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.' It is obvious that one main design of this epistle is to establish the common ground on which Jews and Gentiles now stand under the Christian dispensation—in regard first, to the like disease or condemnation that were upon them both; then to the like remedy which they equally stand in need of; and, most offensive of all, or what required the most strenuous effort on the part of the apostle in reconciling to it the minds of his own countrymen, the same free appliance of that remedy to all upon the face of the earth,—which involved the admission of those who before were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel to the same faith and the same high privileges with themselves. This aim, which from first to last he never lets go or loses sight of, appears so early as in the first chapter, where he speaks of the gospel (ch. i. 16) as being the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. After which, he enters more distinctly and at greater length on the theme in the second chapter (ch. ii. 17-29), where he argues for the common religious footing on which these two now stand —evidently not without the apprehension, or rather the actual experience of a strong repugnance on the part of the Jewish mind to the conclusion which he was labouring to establish. He then—as if a truth revolting to the prejudices of those whom he was addressing should be unfolded gradually—he ventures, if I may say so, in the third chapter, on terms of greater expressness and particularity—charging the Jews with the same sinfulness as the Gentiles (ch. iii. 9), and holding forth to both the same salvation, even that righteousness by faith which is unto all and upon all who believe (ch. iii. 22), 'for there is no difference'— no difference, he certainly means, between Jews and Gentiles, though he does not here make use of these designations, as if he shrunk at first from naming the two, when for the first time he places them on the same even platform of acceptance with God. Yet ere the chapter closes, and as if waxing bolder in the progress of his argument, he does make distinct utterance, though under an aspect of greater generality, of the one Father in heaven being the God not of the Jews only but also of the Gentiles—nay, of His justifying the one whom he there calls the uncircumcision in the same way that He justifies the other whom he distinguishes as the circumcision, by which titles he keeps throughout the whole of his remaining argument in the chapter which follows. He had experienced the sensitiveness of the Jewish prejudices when the name of the Gentiles was introduced in connexion with any such preferment as brought them up to a level with the men of their own nation—more especially on the occasion of that public address he made in person to a great multitude at Jerusalem, who heard him patiently till this word escaped from him—"and they gave him audience unto this word" (Acts xxii. 22)—after which there were no bounds to their indignation. We can fancy as if it were due to that admirable delicacy which is so palpably one of our apostle's great characteristics—that if, when holding converse with Jews, he has occasion to mention the Gentiles as of equal rank and consideration with themselves, he does it so frequently under the cover of a quotation from their own Scriptures.

It is obvious from the whole substance and texture of his argument in this epistle to the Romans, that he feels himself dealing throughout with Jewish understandings, and with men of Jewish education. He never loses sight of the Old Testament, but seems at all times glad of an opportunity whenever he can fortify his reasoning by passages and illustrations taken out of these Scriptures. There is great richness of such allusion in the fourth chapter, nor is it wholly absent from the fifth and seventh, and it makes a full reappearance in the ninth, onward to those verses wherewith we are now occupied. In an earlier part of the epistle, which we have quoted, where the apostle speaks of the righteousness by faith being unto all, he adds—"for there is no difference." And again in the part to which we have now come (ch. x. 12)—in conjunction with those terms of glorious universality, "all" and "whosoever," he adds the very same words—"for there is no difference"—only telling us furthermore between whom—"no difference between the Jew and the Greek." He had before affirmed of Jews and Gentiles that they laboured under the same disease, and that the same remedy was provided for them in heaven; and he is now employed in demonstrating, that in order to the remedy having effect, the bearers of it on earth must carry it equally home to both—or that both must be alike preached unto, and plied with the same calls and overtures, by the messengers of a common salvation. And so he evidently feels himself again to be in contact with certain points of repulsion in the Jewish mind; and for the purpose of gaining access thereunto, recurs to his usual expedients—speaking to their own familiar recognitions, and reasoning with them out of their own Scriptures.

He begins this work of quotation at the fifth verse, and continues it downward till he has established the necessity of sending men over the world to bring others to the faith of the gospel—whence it follows, as the Gentiles by the new economy were to have a part in the same salvation through the medium of the same faith with the Jews, that in order to their believing alike they must be preached unto alike, for how can they believe without hearing, or hear without a preacher?—which preacher or preachers must be sent to them; and this he confirms in the 15th verse by a passage taken from one of the most celebrated of their prophets. But here he interposes in verse 16th a needful and qualifying remark, which might have been suggested indeed by another passage from the same prophet very near to the former one, and to which at all events the apostle expressly appeals. It follows not, though preaching should be the ordinary or even the indispensable prerequisite to faith, that faith should always be the result of preaching. A given cause may be indispensable to a certain effect, and yet not always produce that effect. Though the hearing of the gospel were necessary to the believing of it, it follows not that all who hear should necessarily believe; and accordingly the apostle tells us, 'They have not all obeyed the gospel'—by which he undoubtedly means, that of the all who have heard it, so many have not obeyed it. And he fortifies this assertion by the quotation from Isaiah, 'Who hath believed our report?' The question implies that few had believed; but it also implies, that though belief does not always follow in the train of a previously heard report, yet that when it does take place, it is always or generally in the order of this succession; or, in other words—Though hearing is not always followed up by a subsequent faith as its effect—yet that seldom or never does faith arise in the mind save from an anterior hearing as its cause. And this explains the dependence of the 17th verse on the last clause of the 16th—a dependence more obvious to the reader of the original than it is in the translation; for the word 'report' in the one and the word 'hearing' in the other, are both rendered from the same term * in the Greek. It helps also to impress the connexion more strongly, that whereas in our English Bibles the belief in the one verse and faith in the other, though they signify the same thing yet sound so differently, in the original the same radical is employed in both; † and these two verses would therefore have been translated more synonymously at least if in the 16th it had been translated, Who hath believed in the hearing that we have sounded in his ears? (which, though a complaint, and implying therefore that few had believed, implies also that belief, if not the actual, was at least the proper consequent of hearing), which would have brought out the inference in the 17th more palpably —Therefore belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The question, What plants have arisen from the seed which has been cast into the ground?—clearly implies, that while all seeds do not germinate into plants, yet a plant never arises but from a seed, and that the one is the proper and causal antecedent of the other.

The question then is naturally started at this place, Whether the hearing indispensable to faith has been carried abroad?—and a reply is given in the affirmative, couched in language all the more congenial to the Jewish ear that it was taken from Scripture, and which conveys thus much at least, that the gospel ought to go forth as freely and universally throughout the world as the light of the sun is spread abroad over the surface of it. And in point of fact it had, even when the apostle was writing, been proclaimed far and wide beyond the limits of Judaism; and now there was no let or hindrance, in the nature and design of the economy itself, to restrain the diffusion of it through every place and territory where men were to be found. And accordingly it had sounded forth to the outskirts of the Roman empire, which was then spoken of in terms that properly signified the whole of the habitable earth—insomuch that Paul says of the word of the gospel, "which is come unto you, as it is in all the world," and "which was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (Col. i. 6, 23). So that

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* Ακοη.

† Επιστευσε and πιστις.

to the question, Have men heard the gospel?—there could be no difficulty in giving the prompt and decisive reply, 'Yes verily.'

Ver. 19.—After having replied in the preceding verse generally and for all mankind, the question is reiterated with a special reference to the children of Israel. Did not they in particular know?—had they also the advantage of being made to hear and be acquainted with the subject-matter of preaching? This Paul might have replied to in a clear and decided affirmative—grounding it on the events of his own age. They had a preference over the Gentiles in every respect. They saw Christ in the flesh—they witnessed His miracles—they heard His discourses—even after His ascension, and a commission was left with the apostles to go and preach the gospel unto all nations, still the priority was given to them: for though the apostles went forth with the message of salvation over all the earth, it was after beginning at Jerusalem; and in every place or nation they came to, it was their practice to seek after the Jews and preach to them first—till, wearied out by the obstinate rejection of their doctrine, they made this protest against them—Since you hold yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. Paul could have thus answered in his own person; but, as his general manner was, he goes back upon earlier times—for even then it may be said that the gospel was preached to those of that remoter period as well as unto us of the present day; and from the mouths of two of their own most honoured writers, he gives the same answer, and pronounces upon them the same condemnation. First, Moses, who on a former occasion had said of them, "What nation is so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?"—this same Moses, who thus affirmed the knowledge of the people of Israel to be above that of all the other people upon earth, says afterwards, and in the words here quoted, that as they had abused these privileges, God would transfer them to others who had not been so distinguished, and so provoke them to jealousy by a people who hitherto had been no peculiar people to Him; and anger them by a foolish nation, a nation destitute of the knowledge which had been so plentifully communicated to themselves. And in verses 20th and 21st, Isaiah expresses himself in still bolder and clearer terms. But in the boldness which he ascribes to Isaiah, the apostle very distinctly intimates, that he felt himself treading on delicate ground—engaged as he was in telling the Jews of their national misconduct, and of the forfeiture which they had thereby incurred of the national honours which at one time singled them out and signalized them above all the rest of the human family. "I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest to them that asked not after me." All day long had God stretched forth His hands unto Israel—addressing them, and bringing Himself near unto them, and giving them the knowledge of His will and of His ways. Verily they have not all obeyed the gospel, even though pressed upon their acceptance—for these Israelites in particular, to whom the closest approaches had been made, and the fullest revelation had been given, turned out after all a disobedient and gainsaying people.

This somewhat unmanageable passage may be thus paraphrased: 'There is no difference between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord and Maker of all is rich to all who call on Him. For whosoever shall call on His name shall be saved. But how can they call on Him till they believe in Him, and how can they believe unless they hear of Him, and how can they hear but by a preacher? And in order to this, preachers must be sent, even as those were of whom Isaiah speaks, when, hailing them as the messengers of good, he exclaims, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Yet it follows not that all who are thus preached unto shall believe. In point of fact, all did not put faith in the good tidings; and accordingly the same Isaiah complains of the smallness of their number, saying, Who hath believed our testimony? Yet though belief does not always come after a testimony, a testimony always, or at least ordinarily, comes before the belief—for faith cometh by hearing, though not by all or any sort of hearing, but the hearing only of the word of God. Has not this word then been proclaimed to all? Yes truly—the barrier between Jew and Gentile is now removed; and the Sun of Righteousness should be made as free and patent to all as is the sun of nature. But did Israel share in this light? Yes, and that in a more signal and pre-eminent way; but as they proved themselves unworthy of the privilege, even their own legislator threatened the removal of their candlestick to the other and darker places of the earth; and the highest of their prophets told them in still more decisive terms, that those high preferments of which they boasted should be taken away from them and given to others—and that because of their continued resistance to a beseeching God, who had so long, but in vain, pressed on their acceptance the overtures of His great salvation.'

There are various and important topics for reflection presented throughout the passage which forms the ground-work of this lecture. But we forbear the further consideration of them at present; and all the more readily, that the opportunity for a future treatment of them will not be wanting in what remains of the epistle. For the views which have been already given by us of the 17th verse, we refer to a sermon published many years ago.*

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* First printed in 1812, and now to be found in our volume of "Public and Occasional Sermons."

LECTURE LXXXIII.

ROMANS XI. 1-5.

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

In the preceding chapter we are told of the perfect and unqualified freeness of the gospel—insomuch that it may be held forth, nay urged with all simplicity and earnestness on the acceptance of every man; and in virtue of this, whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved. It follows therefore, that there is not a human creature under heaven from whom the offers of this said gospel ought to be withheld; and it is on the undoubted truth of this position that we have founded at least one reply to a question put, and sometimes in the form of a charge or complaint against the equity of the Divine administration,—Why the blessings of Christianity should be so limited in point of extent, or why a religion, expressly designed for all mankind, should have appropriated or taken full possession of so small a part of the human family? Our answer then was, that ere we arraigned the policy or procedure of the Almighty in this matter, we should first hold a reckoning with ourselves, and determine whether we stand exempted from all censure and crimination on account of it. Certain it is, that a full and unrestricted commission has been put into our hands—Go unto all nations: Go and preach the gospel unto every creature. Have we fulfilled this task? Before speculating on the part which God may have had in this result, would it not be well to inquire how far we stand acquitted of our own part in it? Ere we put the question, Why is it that all men do not believe—is there not another question which seems to have the natural precedency,

—Have all men been preached unto? Have missionaries yet gone abroad over all the dark places of the earth; or, even at our own doors, has the message of salvation been enough sounded forth, or pressed with sufficient importunity on the attention of all the families within the limits of Christendom? If in this we have failed or fallen short, which we have most glaringly, it is scarcely for us at least to charge God with partiality—the God who has put into our hands so liberal and large a warrant, and accompanied it with the promise too, that in the discharge of it He would be with us always, even unto the end of the world. Have we worked enough under the precept?—or prayed enough over the promise? It is scarcely for us at least to cast reproaches on the high government of Heaven, ere we have first addressed ourselves, and that with diligent hands and dependent hearts, to our assigned task upon earth; and then, after having overtured the gospel to all men, seen whether, as the effect of a universal proclamation, a universal Christianity did not follow in its train.

But this, however justly or pertinently it may be said, is yet far from a complete or adequate solution of the phenomenon in question. It is not enough to tell us that the gospel might be declared unto all men, and that all who believe shall be saved—when in point of fact all do not and will not believe it. As to the objective presentation thereof, there might be the utmost possible latitude and freeness in the gospel; but in order to its taking effect there must also be a subjective consent thereto on the part of those to whom it is addressed. Now it appears from thousands and thousands more of successive specimens, in as many different localities where the experiment has been tried, that all who hear the gospel, however rightly and authoritatively preached to them, do not obey the gospel; and this difference, this subjective difference between one man and another, is a fact or phenomenon which remains to be accounted for. We shall not here say again what we have already said, when, expounding former chapters in this epistle, we were led to discuss the high topic of predestination. We then admitted, and still with all confidence repeat, that while there is diversity of operations, it is God who worketh all in all—that He is throned in universal sovereignty—as supreme in the inner and unseen world of spirits as He is absolute and uncontrolled in fixing all the events which belong to the visible history of nature and providence. On this principle, we cannot look to the fact of one man believing the gospel, without connecting it with the fact that God has ordained it so—and neither can we look to the fact of another man disobeying the gospel, without connecting it with the fact that God has left it so. If asked to assign the reason of God having so done, or the cause of this difference between one man and another, and that with the view of explaining or vindicating the counsels of the upper sanctuary—we have no other answer to make, but we make it frankly and immediately—than that we cannot tell. At an earlier stage of this exposition we have attempted to draw what we conceive to be the limit between the knowable and the unknowable in this question; and have also there stated the principles on which we hold, that, whatever difficulty there may be in explaining the procedure of God, this carries in it no excuse for the wickedness of man. The moral certainties in the one field are not in the least bedimmed or overshaded by the metaphysical obscurities which rest on the other and the more arduous field of speculation. Man's unbelief, if resolvable into man's wilfulness—and our Saviour does resolve it into the evil of their own doings*—stands as clearly out a rightful object of condemnation, whether the policy and jurisprudence of Heaven are thrown open to our view, or shrouded in deepest secrecy. If the question be put, Why are some only preached unto, and not all? we reply, that as far as this proceeds from the indifference of those called Christians to the souls of the perishing millions around them, the fault lies clearly with man. If the question be put, Why do some only of those preached unto believe and not all? we reply, that as far as this proceeds from the love of darkness and the power of depravity, the perversity and the fault still lie clearly with man. But if the question be put, Why is it that the Spirit from on high selects some only, whom He disposes to receive and obey the gospel, and not all? we confess ourselves overawed by the difficulties of a theme so transcendentally and so hopelessly above us; and would join the apostle in saying, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"

Ver. 1.—'I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.' At the conclusion of the last chapter we find the apostle saying, that, all day long, or during the whole period of their political subsistence as a nation, God had held converse either in the way of remonstrance or entreaty, with the children of Israel—sending them, from one age to another, prophets and righteous men, whom they slew and persecuted—till at length they crucified the Lord of glory, after which, by an act of terrible retribution, the whole Jewish economy, both civil and ecclesiastical, was utterly exterminated, or swept off by the "besom of destruction," from the face of the earth. The question of our present verse follows quite naturally in the train of such a contemplation. Hath God then entirely rejected His ancient people; hath He wholly and conclusively cast them away? to which question Paul's answer is a prompt and emphatic negative; and in confirmation of which he quotes himself as a specimen. He himself was an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham and tribe of Benjamin, or as he elsewhere says, a Hebrew of the Hebrews—yet, so far from being an outcast, was a convert to the new faith, and in full possession both of its hopes and privileges. It is perhaps somewhat gratuitous in some to imagine that he particularizes his tribe because it was the last and least of the twelve, and at one time indeed on the eve of its extermination—as all the more striking illustration or proof, that, great and signal though the days of their calamitous visitation had been, yet "the Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance" (Psalm xciv. 14). But instead of straining at ingenuities of this sort, let us be satisfied with the idea, that Paul meant nothing more by the specification of his tribe than simply to authenticate his genealogy as a Jew, and so make it all the more palpable that he incurred no forfeiture thereby—seeing that he was not only himself gifted with the unsearchable riches of Christ, but commissioned to preach, and thus make a full tender of them to others also.

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* John iii. 19.

Ver. 2, 3.—'God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.' God did not reject all Israel. He did not cast off those whom He foreknew, and who were the objects not of His prescience only, but of His predestination to eternal blessedness. "Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate." We are here reminded of the expression, that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel." God knoweth His own. He hath known them from the beginning, and all His purposes regarding them shall stand.

And these gracious purposes of the Almighty often extend to a greater number than we think; and of this the apostle gives a most memorable historic illustration in the case of the prophet Elijah—who cast a despairing eye over the land of Israel, and could not recognise over the whole length and breadth of it, even so much as one true worshipper. He made complaint to God of a universal apostasy—grounding as is often done in all sciences and all subjects a hasty generalization on his own limited and personal experience. But God seeth not as man seeth. He knew the children of His own election, His own "hidden ones," as they have been termed; and could discern no less than seven thousand, when the prophet, gifted and endowed as he was, could not fix on a single individual. God knew them then as well as foreknew them (ver. 2) from all eternity; but it is altogether worthy of observation, that it is not by their election that He marks them out to Elijah. He does not read their names to him out of the book of life in heaven, or make any revelation of the secret purposes respecting them which He had from everlasting. He singles them out to the prophet by a sensible and a present mark, by a great and palpable act of obedience to His will upon earth. 'But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal' (ver. 4).

Now we hold it of great theological importance to notice this peculiarity. God might have told Elijah of His primitive decree respecting these men. But no—He prefers telling him of their present doings. Known to Himself are all His works, and among the rest, the state of these seven thousand men from the beginning of the world; and on this high and transcendental ground He could have told the prophet of their safety. But, instead of this, He chooses what may be called a lower and experimental ground, on which to indicate or make known to him the condition of these men as children of God's own family. They had not bowed the knee to Baal; and this He thought to be ground enough on which to satisfy the mind of Elijah—thereby maintaining and exemplifying the distinction between the secret things which belong unto God and the revealed things which belong to us and to our children.

And surely if God, even at the time of a special and extraordinary communication to one of His highest prophets—when telling him of these seven thousand men—reserved the secret of their predestination, and laid all the stress upon their practice—surely it is not for us, unvisited by any such illumination, to explore the dark recesses of a past eternity, or seek to open the book of God's decrees, that we may find the names of the persons who are recorded there. There is a better method, and one nearer at hand, by which to assure ourselves that we are the subjects of a blessed ordination, even by doing as these Hebrew saints in the days of Elijah, by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. The Lord knoweth them that are His, and so knew them from all eternity. But man knoweth them that are the Lord's in another way; and this in virtue of the perfect, the never-failing harmony, which obtains between the election and the sanctification. It is true that God predestinates to eternal life, but never without predestinating those whom He designs for this glorious inheritance "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. viii. 29). Election is anterior to character; yet so unbroken is the connexion between them, that character becomes a criterion by which to ascertain the election. For this we need not aspire to the inaccessible steeps which are above, but have only to persevere in the toils of our appointed task below. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and some there are who love to carry upward their speculation, even to the highest point of a high and supralapsarian Calvinism. Let not this supersede the carefulness wherewith every Christian should observe, nor yet the earnestness wherewith every Christian minister should urge the saying—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19).

But there is something more in this verse which we have not yet adverted to—fitted to animate and cheer the heart of him who eyes with despondency the present moral and religious state, whether of the country or of the world. We mean the superiority by which God's estimate, or the true estimate, of what was still good in Israel, exceeded in amount that of the prophet. The 'even so' of the next verse warrants our making this application. Elijah's imagination was, that he stood alone; but God knew better, and told him of seven thousand who were like-minded with himself. And so are there many in this our day, and sometimes the more saintly and spiritual are the most liable to this miscalculation, who, as they contemplate the prevalence of infidelity and wickedness around them, underrate the Christianity both of their own neighbourhood and of the nation at large. The number of God's hidden ones may be greater than we think of—known only to Him, and in places where we have no suspicion of their existence. It is thus that the pleasing discovery is sometimes made within the bosom of vicinities and households where we least expected it; and many, we trust, even at short distances from our own habitation, are the unseen heirs of grace and immortality, whom we shall never recognise as such till we meet them in heaven. It were better certainly for the interests both of personal and public Christianity, that all real disciples of the truth as it is in Jesus should know each other better, and company with each other more. And this makes their obligation all the more imperative of "confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus" (Rom. x. 9), or of coming forth with those frank and intrepid avowals which might "declare plainly that they seek a country" (Heb. xi. 14)—and thus, by leading to a greater mutual acquaintanceship, might bring these fellow-travellers to Zion more closely and constantly beside each other. It were well in these expectants of a higher citizenship, these voyagers for heaven, to seek out each other by the way—and that not merely for a benefit to themselves, from the fellowship or communion of saints here; but for the greater command which it would enable them to wield over the moral destinies of the world.* Union, it has often been said, is strength; but it is not in the secret, it is in the ostensible union of the friends and followers of Christianity that the great strength of their cause lies; and what with the greater force of that cementing principle which binds them together, as well as the mighty hold which their peculiar objects have over conscience—the highest faculty of our nature, we should look for the greatest possible results from their visible combination—in speeding onward the triumphs of the faith, and the full and final establishment in the world of the empire of truth and righteousness.

And it is not enough that we look to the state of Christianity as it now stands—we should look to Christianity in progress. For by however small a fraction we may compute its hold of our species now, a time is coming when we shall cease to count it by minorities and remnants. The eye of God not only explores the present, but with a thorough cognisance of time as well as space, it reaches onward to the most distant futurity. He not only knows, but He foreknows. By the voice of an immediate revelation He gave comfort to the despairing heart of Elijah, when He told him of the numbers who, even at the time of what seemed an all but universal defection and idolatry, still held by the true religion. And by the voice of prophecy in Scripture, He gives the like comfort to us, as we cast perhaps a desponding eye over the moral state and prospects of the world—in the bright perspective which He has there opened up to us, of the enlargement and the triumphs that still await the gospel of His Son. For amid all that is fitted to darken and discourage, we should recollect of the present that it is but the infancy of the Christian religion, and that we are yet among the struggles and the uncertainties of its embryo state. To have some idea of the glorious and magnificent expansion before us, we have only to look at the millennium of our regenerated world in the dimensions of prophecy, where every day is a year, and every year is made up of centuries—insomuch that what may be termed the middle age of Christianity, is reckoned by only three years and a half, comprehensive though it be of many generations. And beyond this spectacle of blessedness and glory, we have the glimpse of further and larger developments, which, in the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation, retire onward from the view till lost in the distances of eternity. Could we see the whole in the light of the Infinite Mind, the perfect wisdom and perfect goodness of all His purposes would be seen most gloriously; and as even in one of Israel's darkest days, when He told of the seven thousand whom He reserved to Himself, He alleviated the brooding imagination of the prophet, and taught him not to think so despairingly of the state of his nation—so, could we be made to behold across our present day of small things the evolutions of a greatness and prosperity still in reserve even for a world now lying in wickedness—or did the mighty and successive eras of the Divine administration rise in vision before us, then, instead of looking forward with dejection or dismay, we should lift up our heads and rejoice in the destinies of our species.

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* John xvii. 21.

But though the apostle, in the course of this chapter, extends his regards to futurity, and lays before us, though in dim transparency, the varying fortunes both of Jews and Gentiles in distant ages—he has not yet quitted the consideration of matters as they stood at the time when he was writing, and accordingly tells us in the fifth verse, that even of his own countrymen there was at that moment a remnant who should be saved. We may indeed gather directly from the Scriptural narrative, the evidences of a goodly number of converts to the gospel, or at least of professing disciples, from among the children of Israel. We have first the apostles; and doubtless so many of Hebrew extraction, in the hundred and twenty who were with them on the day of Pentecost; and also of the thousands who believed anterior to the calling of the Gentiles; and further, all of that great company of the priests who were 'obedient to the faith' (Acts vi. 7)—all in harmony with the assertion of Paul, that 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.'

Ver. 5.—Grace, in the New Testament, signifies either a gift, or the kindness which prompted the gift. There can be no misunderstanding of it, for example, in the former sense, when, in 1 Cor. xvi. 3, the apostle speaks of bringing their *liberality* to Jerusalem—that is, the fruit of their liberality, so rendered from the original word, commonly translated into 'grace' throughout Scripture. And there can be as little misunderstanding of it in the latter sense, when the same Greek word is translated into 'favour' in Luke ii. 52, where we read, that Jesus increased in favour with God and man. In those instances where the gift is specified in connexion with the grace which originated or conveyed it, this leaves no other meaning for the grace than the kindness, which is a very common and perhaps its primary signification. For example—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation" (Tit. ii. 11), where salvation is the gift, and grace the kindness of the giver—"Grace reigneth unto eternal life," where eternal life is the gift, and grace the goodness which prompted it of Him whose gift it is—"Being justified freely by his grace," where the being justified, or justification, is the gift, and grace is the kind or generous disposition of Him who hath conferred it. And to close our list of instances with the verse which is before us—'The election of grace'—where grace is the cause, election the effect; or where election is the gift, and grace is the kindness of the Giver to him on whom He hath bestowed it. It is thus that the election of grace has been defined gratuitous election—the election of pure kindness or good-will—the fruit of a generosity altogether spontaneous—a present, in short, and not a payment in return for any service or in consideration of any merit on the part of him who is the object of it.

Now this distinction between the kindness which prompts a gift and the gift itself; or between the generosity as it exists in the bosom of the dispenser and the fruit of that generosity, as imparted in the shape of a service done or a benefit rendered to him who is the object of it—in a word, between the beneficence and the benefaction, enables us to discriminate between the different kinds of grace, which, though all emanating from the same fountain, even the good-will of Him who is in heaven, yet are each characterized or specified, and so as to distinguish them from the rest, by the distinct and particular good done to him in behalf of whom the grace and goodness of the Father of all spirits has been exercised. Thus there might be a justifying grace, as when God justifies the ungodly; or a sanctifying grace, as when God bestows His Spirit to help our infirmities; or, comprehensive of both, a saving grace, as when it is said, "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 5, 8). Or, finally, the grace of our present text, the electing grace, here termed the grace of election—that in the exercise of which He set His special love on certain of His creatures from all eternity, as on the seven thousand of Israel whom He reserved unto Himself, and who, in virtue of this His distinguishing favour, were borne onward in safety through all the dangers and temptations of their earthly pilgrimage, till admitted in secure and everlasting enjoyment to the blessedness of heaven.

LECTURE LXXXIV.

ROMANS XI. 6-10.

"And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (according as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway."

There is one very obvious distinction between the electing grace of God, and the other sorts of it which have now been specified. In the election of any man thus favoured and thus signalized, God stood alone. The act took place before that the man was born, nay "before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). It is not only prior to all the other forthputtings of Divine grace, but it gives birth to them all. If it be true that none but the elect shall obtain the kingdom of heaven; and it be also true that unless we are justified, and unless we are made holy, we shall not enter therein—then must every elect sinner have both the justifying and the sanctifying grace put forth upon him, ere that he reaches his final destination; and the connexion is not more inseparable between any consequents in nature or history, and the antecedents from which they have sprung, than that which binds together the justification and the sanctification which take place on earth with the election which took place in heaven—the one in fact being the source or the fountain-head whence the others flow. They follow each other like the links of a chain stretching backward to the eternity that is past, and forward to the eternity which is to come. Paul enumerates a few of these links, not all of them contiguous—for other links than these he mentions, and intermediate between them, could be supplied both from other Scripture and from experience. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified (them he also sanctified; and whom he sanctified), them he also glorified."

We have already said of the great and primary act of grace, the grace of election, that at the time of passing it, God was the only party; and in this respect it stands distinguished from the other or subordinate acts of grace. For in these last man *bears* a part—nay we should hold it the evidence of a sensitive and extreme, and in fact ill-understood orthodoxy, to shrink from the assertion that in these last man *acts* a part. By saying so we infringe not in the least on the supremacy of God, nor abridge by ever so little the agency of His grace, as being all in all in the business of man's salvation. It is most true that He worketh all in all; but He worketh on every distinct subject of His power agreeably to its distinct and characteristic nature. When working in the world of inorganic matter, He does not change the elements or bereave them of their respective properties and forces; but upholding them in these, and preserving the distinction between them—He maketh the winds and the waters and the lightnings, and even the inert and solid earth we tread upon, the instruments of His pleasure. When He worketh in the animal or vegetable kingdoms, He reverses not one law or process of physiology; but operating on everything according to its kind, and without violence done either to the generical or specifical varieties of each—still it is He who "causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth" (Ps. civ. 14); and it is He also who maintains the powers and the instincts of every living creature, as when, in the sublime language of Job, He giveth to the horse its strength and clotheth his neck with thunder. And it is even so in the moral world. Everywhere He is all in all—supreme in the higher as in the lower departments of nature; and yet neither obliterating the characteristics nor overbearing the functions of any individual thing in which or by which He is pleased to operate—whether it be a plant or an animal, or finally a man—over whom He has the entire and resistless sovereignty, yet exercises it with perfect conformity to all the feelings and faculties of his moral nature—his conscience—his intelligence—his choice—and the whole busy play of his emotions and purposes and endeavours. God worketh all in all, and as completely in man as in any other of His creatures. But what is it that He worketh in him? He worketh in him to will and to do. So that there is room both for the sovereign grace of God the Creator, and the spontaneous acting of man the creature. In all that is good, and therefore agreeable to God's good pleasure, the creature acts just in the degree, be it great or small, in which the Creator actuates. And therefore it is that in those acts of grace which, as contradistinguished from its great and primary act, or the grace of election, we termed its subordinate acts—we say not merely that man bears a part, but even acts a part,—as in believing, though faith be indeed the gift of God;* or in understanding, though it be the Spirit who opens the understanding to understand the Scriptures; or in attending, though it be the Lord that openeth the heart to attend, as He did that of Lydia;† or in praying, though it be from above that the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured upon us; ‡ or in willing, though it be God alone who makes us willing for good in the day of His power; § or in striving, though we can strive mightily only according to His working who worketh in us mightily; || and finally, in the business of purifying ourselves and perfecting our own holiness, though this can only be as fellow-workers with God, who have not received His grace or His promises in vain, when God will dwell in us and walk in us.** In all these instances there is a grace put forth from on high, and this responded to from being acted on from below. This may serve to establish our discrimination between the primary act of grace, even that of election, in which man has no part, and the subordinate acts, in which man has a part—and which are termed by us subordinate, not only because posterior in time, but because dependent in the order of cause and effect on the preordination from which they all have germinated. It is obvious that man had no part in the primary act, any more than he has had a part in his own creation. But it is alike obvious that he has a part in the subordinate acts, though a part of as entire subjection as is that of the clay in the hands of the potter. It is a part however, and such a part as properly and characteristically belongs to a willing, understanding, purposing, and acting creature. And so he believes, perhaps after inquiry and prayer, in order to his justification; and he obeys, both with prayer and painstaking, in order to his sanctification; and while nothing is more true than that by grace alone he is saved, yet in perfect harmony with this, and as being a grace which both teaches and

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* Eph. ii. 8.

† Acts xvi. 14.

‡ Zech. xii. 10.

§ Psalm cx. 3.

|| Col. i. 29.

** 2 Cor. vii. 1; vi. 1, 16.

enables him to live soberly, righteously, and godly—it is equally true that it is for him to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now we hold it of capital importance, both for rightly dividing the word of truth and for the guidance of our practical Christianity, clearly to understand that there is nothing in the consideration of the primary grace passed in heaven long ago which should in the very least affect or embarrass the part we ought to take on earth in that subordinate grace wherewith we have presently to do. We are the more anxious to press this home, because of the imagination that the one is a barrier in the way of our dealing freely and confidently with the other, just as is prescribed and plainly laid down for us in Scripture. Whatever your capacity may be for the doctrine of election—whether it be a strong meat which you are able for; or—if fit only for the milk which serves to the nourishment of babes—you ought not to meddle with it—this cannot change, nor should it in the slightest degree darken those stable categories of Scripture that concern either the duties to be done by all, or the calls and the promises which are there held out to all. This doctrine must be profitable to some at least, else it would have formed no part or parcel of Scripture,* though perhaps it may not yet have been profitable to you—nay, though in danger, it may be, of being so perverted and misunderstood as to be wrested by you to your own hurt. God may at length, or He may not, reveal even this unto you, as He does to others who are perfect.† But be this as it may—let that great and primary deed of grace which took place amid the counsels of the past eternity, and was transacted when God stood alone—let that be to you a lofty and transcendental theme which you cannot lay hold of, but which must remain an inaccessible mystery till the time cometh when you shall know even as you are known. There is posterior to this, and subordinate to this, a grace, in the operation of which God standeth not alone, but which He brings to bear on earth's lowly platform—that here it may circulate at large and come into busy converse with the hearts and among the habitations of men. Of this grace as placed within the reach of all, it is the duty of all to avail themselves. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find;" pray for the Holy Spirit, and He shall be given to you; believe, and ye shall be saved; and, in order to this belief, give earnest heed to the things which are spoken—these are all so many parts and manifestations of that subordinate, or, as it may be termed, of that accessible or available grace whereof I am now speaking, and of which each man is called on to avail himself, and that without once bestowing a thought or a conjecture on the question whether he has or has not a part in the grace of election. These are the revealed and the patent and the palpable things we have to do with here, and they ought not to be complicated with the hidden things, which lie far out of sight among the viewless eminences of the region that is above us. We cannot in any possible way change our election, or make it surer than it is in itself; neither can we make it surer than it already is unto God. Yet there is a way, and that too a way of diligence in certain things, by which we may make it sure unto ourselves—"for if ye do these things ye shall never fall" (2 Pet. i. 10). No doubt it is by the election of grace that a remnant of Jews was preserved to the exclusion of the rest of the nation; but there is no such election as should foreclose the application to that outcast people of all that available grace, the means and instruments of which have been so amply put into our hands. It was upon their seeking wrongly, and not on election (ch. ix. 32), that their rejection immediately or proximately turned; and again upon their seeking rightly will their restoration as immediately turn. "If they abide not still in unbelief," they will certainly be recalled; and there is nothing respecting them in the book of secret destiny which will hinder this result. Let the things which are written there be as impenetrably shrouded as they may, our way is clear—which is, to ply the children of Israel with the offers of salvation, and give no rest to God in prayer till He make Jerusalem a praise upon the earth. And for speeding onward the work of home Christianity our way is equally clear—which is, for ministers, on the one hand, to preach it urgently and freely in the hearing of every man; and for aspiring disciples, on the other, to read and to supplicate and to reform the evil of their doings, and not only to seek but to strive, nay, even to press with all vigour and violence into the kingdom of heaven till they take it by force.

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* 2 Tim iii. 16.

† Phil. iii. 15.

Ver. 6.—'And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.' For the full and clear exposition of this remarkable verse, it must be taken to pieces, that several distinct things may be adverted to.

'And if by grace.' If what by grace? Look to the preceding verse. ‘There is a remnant according to the election of grace; and if by grace.’ If it be by grace that there is a remnant, or if it be of grace that God has elected; or, looking to the anterior verse, if God have reserved them to Himself by grace.[*] The apostle is here making statement of the cause or origin to which the selection of a certain number as God’s own peculiar people is to be referred. Their selection is by grace—a matter of mere favour—of free generosity and good-will, and so altogether a gift on the part of God.

‘Then is it no more of works.’ Grace is not only the cause of God having reserved a certain number to Himself; but it is the sole cause. He makes mention of another and a rival cause which has often been assigned for this preference of the elect by God; but he does so for the purpose of rejecting it, and thereby fortifies the simple assertion which he had made, or makes a more strenuous asseveration of it. He utterly repudiates the idea of its being a reward or recompence for works done, or we may add, for works foreseen. It is not of works in any way, but altogether a thing of sovereign and spontaneous bounty. It is a present, not a payment—a thing freely conferred by God, not rightfully claimed or challenged by man. Yet though not of or by works, it may be to works. That is a different matter. Though it is not because we have lived righteously that we are made the objects of this grace, yet because the objects of this grace are we both taught and enabled to live righteously.[†] “Not of works, lest any man should boast:” yet, after all, created unto good works—for the same God who ordains to everlasting life ordains also the heirs of a blissful eternity to walk in them.[‡] It is interesting to observe that the same high and absolute terms which guarantee the final salvation of the elect, guarantee also the virtuousness of their character and conduct. They are ordained, it is true, to eternal life:[§] yet are they ordained also to walk in good works.[||] And they are predestinated to be His children:[**] yet predestinated to be conformed unto the image of His Son.[††] And they are chosen before the foundation of the world: yet chosen to be holy, and without blame in love.[‡‡] And they are elect according to foreknowledge: yet is it an election sealed and confirmed by the sanctification of the Spirit, as well as belief of the truth.[§§]

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[*] Ver. 4, *κατελιπον*—Ver. 5, *λειμμα*.

[†] Tit. ii. 11, 12.

[‡] Eph. ii. 9, 10.

[§] Acts xiii. 48.

[||] Eph. ii. 10.

[**] Eph. i. 5.

[††] Rom. viii. 29.

[‡‡] Eph. i. 4.

[§§] 1 Pet. i. 2.

'Otherwise grace is no more grace.' By this clause there is an advance made in the apostle's argument; and we are made to know of grace and works, that not only are they distinct, but in the matter at issue they are opposites, or incompatible, nay mutually destructive the one of the other. What is earned by service is not received as a gift. As far as you make it a thing of favour, you annihilate it as a thing of merit; or as far as you make it a thing of merit, you annihilate it as a thing of favour. Neither must we understand it to be so far of works and so far of grace, or compounded and made up as it were of these two categories. The doctrine of the apostle here, as of the New Testament everywhere, is, that God's friendship is either of works wholly or of grace wholly. There is no intermediate ground between the first and second covenants—the one being altogether of works, and the other altogether of bounty. It is not of works in part and of grace in part, but either of grace entirely and works not at all, or of works entirely and grace not at all. It is by grace and not of works by ever so little, lest to the extent of that little any man should boast,* or lest to the extent of that little it should be of debt.† These two elements are not only separated, but placed in opposition to each other, and so in fact as to make it a war of extermination between them. The attempt of piecing the one to the other, or of mixing together the two covenants, is utterly repudiated in Scripture, as fatal to the peace of the believer, and subversive of the whole economy of the gospel.

'But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.' This whole clause is by critics of greatest authority rejected as an interpolation. It is but an expression, or more properly a reiteration of the same truth; and signifies that, of the two elements in question, as grace would utterly dispossess works from having aught to do in the matter of our acceptance with God, so works would as wholly and effectually dispossess grace.

That this holds true of God's electing grace is quite obvious, both from the nature of the grace itself and from other parts of Scripture. The children of election are made so before that they are born, or had yet done either good or evil—and this that the purpose of God might stand according to election, and not of works, but of Him that calleth.‡ In the act of choosing or predestinating at the first, works could have no place; and grace was all in all. Then God was alone. Out and out the destiny of the blest to their everlasting happiness is a thing of His determination—a determination including, no doubt, the previous or preparatory works of each, as well as his final salvation, but still a determination which was at once the primary cause and fountain-head of both.

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* Eph. ii. 9.

† Rom. iv. 4.

‡ Rom. ix. 11.

And what to us at least is of practically greater importance, the same holds true not of electing grace merely, but of justifying grace also. We hold it as being of prime and vital magnitude, for else the gospel were nullified, that we should understand our justification to be altogether of grace, and not in the least, not at all of works. Our meritorious acceptance with God, or as it may be termed our judicial right of entry into heaven, rests upon a basis that is one and homogeneous, consisting of but a single ingredient, even that of grace—grace through the righteousness of Christ*—at least to the utter exclusion of our own works as the other ingredient, the admixture whereof though in but the smallest item or iota, would operate as a vitiating flaw to deteriorate, nay utterly pervert the pure quality or essence of that which constitutes the available righteousness of a sinner before that Lawgiver, of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation. Let a man's own deservings be admitted by ever so little, as forming part of his plea in law for the rewards of eternity; and the question would instantly be stirred—has that little been made out?—on which we should have aspirants for heaven of two sorts: First, they of more delicate and enlightened conscience, who, always and with good reason, dissatisfied with themselves, would be incessantly seeking rest and never finding it. Secondly, they of blunter moral sensibility, who under their system of at least a little human virtue to eke out the price or purchase-money for a place in heaven, can sit at ease, and just because they can make so little serve. The two elements of our text, the grace and the works, in the matter of justification, will not amalgamate—for let works but enter in proportion and degree however small,—they will either, on the one hand, waken up again all the jealousies and disquietudes of the old covenant; or infuse that mercantile and mercenary spirit which, labouring to drive a hard bargain for heaven, both limits the amount and secularizes the character of our obedience—making it as unlike as possible, whether in respect of indefinite progress or willing alacrity and delight, to the services of heaven-born love and liberty. We may hence see the moral purpose of the Epistle to the Galatians as part of the Bible. In the Epistle to the Romans, the doctrine of justification without works is presented with great force and fulness as a general proposition. In that to the Galatians, we have the apostolic treatment and disposal in a specific case of a claim put in, for one virtue at least, to a share in the office of building up a meritorious righteousness before God—so as that consideration and a place might be given to it, however small or subordinate it may be, in the title-deed of Christians to the Jerusalem above. This was the solitary right of circumcision—the main observance if not the all, which the Jews contended for. To whom Paul would not give way, no not for an instant; but withstood to the face, in the spirit and with the determination of a mortal warfare—as if a question of life or death to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so he fought with all his might against it, giving no quarter—for he saw the evil of it in its full extent—that it would make the cross of none effect, and revive the bondage of other days, and reinstate the whole law, with its unsatisfied demands and unappeased terrors, over the consciences of men—so as to substitute the obedience, either of slavish dread or of a lifeless form, for the free and grateful and confiding services of the gospel. We cannot but admire the exquisite wisdom of thus keeping the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God intact and inviolable; nor let us wonder at the intense earnestness of Paul, when in every form of strenuous asseveration he maintains the doctrine of justification, not by faith, but by faith *alone*—as being the only solid foundation of peace, the only outlet and incentive to virtue along the career of a progressive holiness.

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* Rom. v. 21.

Ver. 7.—'What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.' The same apostle who tells the primary cause of the difference between Jews and Gentiles, by tracing it upward to the predestination of God, also tells us the proximate cause of this difference in the practice of men. Israel did not obtain that which he sought for, because he sought it wrongly, that is, by the works of the law instead of faith. Only they of the election obtained it, and why?—for the primary does not supersede the proximate—Because they sought it rightly. Yet he recurs again from the part which men had in it to the part which God had in it, when in the last clause of this verse, taken along with a few succeeding verses, he tells us that 'the rest were blinded.'

Ver. 8-10.—'(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling-block, and a recompence unto them: let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway.' One might imagine that on the back of the assertion in the last clause, even that 'the rest were blinded'—the question might be put, Who blinded them? and the answer be given in the verses now placed before you. We are sensible that this would be felt by many as a harsh and injurious representation of the Deity; and we are also aware of the softening expedients which have been resorted to, in order to mitigate or do it away. For this purpose ingenious men have drawn upon the hypothesis, that like as all matter is essentially at rest* till put in motion by an external cause—so every created being, though endowed with both moral and intellectual capacities, is essentially devoid† of all spiritual light or spiritual goodness, till these are communicated by Him who is the author of every good and perfect gift. It is thus that they would repel the charge of God being the author of sin, by denying that God makes men sin—for that He only withholds the grace which would make them righteous. And in like manner would they deny that God blinds the eyes of any, but that He only withholds the light which would make them see—insomuch that He is no more the author of spiritual, than the sun is the author or fountain-head of material darkness. And so they view the matter thus—that all which is evil springs from the creature or from beneath, but all which is positively good from the Creator—He often leaving men to themselves, but never putting Himself forth or operating efficiently upon them, save for the purpose of illuminating or making them holy.

Now for ourselves, we feel it not necessary, either to adopt this hypothesis or decisively to reject it. For aught we know, there may be—grounded on some deep-hid physical necessity, which we are not in circumstances either to affirm or deny—that essential defectibility in every created thing which the Schoolmen tell us of; and if so, it looks a plausible conclusion that all the direct moral influences put forth by God upon His creatures are on the side of what is good,—while all the evil which they exhibit is not worked in them by the Divinity, but only left to its own working, as it comes inherently and properly from themselves. We have no quarrel with this argument—for though not convinced by it, neither do we feel ourselves able to overturn it; and so long as it remains a plausibility which infidels cannot dispose of, it rests on at least as good a footing as their own objection; and both therefore—both the hostile consideration of religion's enemy, and the defensive consideration of its friend—may be kept alike at abeyance. It is thus that we are sometimes led to look with indulgence on this one and that other scholastic ingenuity, conjured up for the protection of the faith—for though not in itself absolutely proved, yet, if incapable of being disproved, it may at least neutralize many an objection, intended by their authors as so many deadly thrusts at the Christian revelation—a revelation which stands secure on the basis of its own evidences, amid the conflicting and sometimes alike shadowy speculations both of its friends and its adversaries. But as we said before, for our own satisfaction these conjectural theories are in no demand with us; and though with some minds they should serve for the removal of stumbling-blocks at which they might otherwise have fallen, yet for ourselves we can take these verses as they stand, and in their obvious meaning too—a meaning all too plain to require the exposition of them. We expect enigmas in theology as well as in nature; and as in the one department we do not permit them to overbear the manifestation of the senses—so in the other they ought not to overbear either the lights of history in favour of the Bible, or the manifestation of its truth unto our consciences.

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* By its *vis inertiæ*.

† By the essential defectibility of the creature.

And yet in these verses, hopelessly recondite and intractable as they may appear, we can read a lesson of signal value in practical religion. Even in philosophy, with the objects which we most familiarly handle, and the processes which pass most currently before our eyes, we are soon baffled and get beyond our soundings, when we attempt to trace present appearances into the past, though but a few steps back among the depths of causation. Let us not wonder then, if we should find it to be the same in the spiritual processes of Christianity; or if there should be a distinction here too between things present, which we know how to deal with, and things remote, which elude our every effort to grasp or comprehend them. This is remarkably exemplified in the subject-matter of the passage now before us. We can say little or nothing of anterior, and especially of first movements—just as little in fact as we can clear our way upward to the electing grace of God. And yet we can see thoroughly to the movements in hand, and wherewith we have most emphatically and most urgently to do. If we indulge in listless and spiritual sloth about the high matters of our salvation, God will give us the spirit of slumber. If we refuse to look with our eyes, God will take away that which we have, and so darken our eyes that we cannot see. If we hearken not diligently now at the call of principle, the conscience within will afterwards emit a feebler voice; and even the loudest remonstrances from without of the word and the preacher, may, in the growing obtuseness of faculties which we will not exercise, be altogether unheeded by the moral ear. If the store of comforts wherewith Providence has blessed us, prove but a snare and a provocative to our unbridled appetites—these too will be made to war against our souls. In short, by that economy of grace under which we sit, there may be an ever-growing blindness and ever-growing hardness, which follow judicially in the train of guilty indulgences; and, on the other hand, let the most be made of the light and the strength we at present have—and then, in the order of God's administration, or on the principle of the Holy Ghost being given to those who obey Him, this will be followed up by a supply of larger powers and larger manifestations. Here then is a view of these particular Scriptures now before us, eminently subservient to the business of our discipleship as Christians; and whatever obscurity may rest on the initial steps of this process, it is surely our part, among the actual steps of it in which we are now implicated, if we cannot solve the difficulties of the past, at least to busy ourselves with all diligence in the duties of the present—that is, to awake from our lethargies, and Christ will give us light; to order our conversation aright, and God will show us His salvation.* These are the matters on hand wherewith we plainly have to do; and even the history of the Jews may be turned to the practical account which we are now making of them. For though the primary cause of their being cast off may be traced upward to a decree of election (verse 5), its proximate cause was their own misconduct. Their personal rejection by God came on the back of their own rejection of the Saviour. They had withstood His miracles. They had turned a deaf ear to all His invitations. They had shut their eyes and steeled their consciences against such evidences of His mission as ought to have overpowered them ; and the effect was that it just hardened and blinded them the more—insomuch that in the view of their approaching desolation, when the pitying Saviour wept over them, He pronounced as the final result of their impenitency in not minding the things which belonged to their peace—that now they were hid from their eyes. Well then did the apostle supplement the quotations from writers of an ancient period, by a clause which applied their description to the Jews of his own time—'Unto this day.'

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* Eph. v. 14; Psalm L. 23.

LECTURE LXXXV.

ROMANS XI. 11-22.

"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive-tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree; boast not against the branches: but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

ONE of Paul's maxims was, that for the sake of the gospel he should be all things to all men; and, more especially, that to the Jews he should be as a Jew. No one could practise with greater skill or delicacy than he did the art of conciliating those whom he addressed—though, of course, he carried this only so far as truth and principle would let him. Nothing could be more sturdy and determined than his resistance, as we may see in his whole Epistle to the Galatians, when any great or cardinal doctrine of the gospel was trenched upon, though by ever so little. Yet when it possibly could be avoided, none was more sensitively fearful of giving offence than he; and when unavoidable, which it very generally was, he was always at the greatest pains to soften it to the uttermost. Even in the verses which we have just quitted, and in which he had to pronounce an awful sentence of abandonment and utter degradation upon his countrymen the Jews, still he does it as a Jew—interposing their own writers as a sort of screen between him and them; and, as if more effectually to secure their conviction if not their acquiescence and consent, speaking to them not in his own person, but in the persons of their most revered prophets and holy men of old. And in the succeeding verses we can very obviously see with what congeniality, as if to redeem and compensate the severities which he had just uttered, he breaks forth on the coming enlargement of the children of Israel; and with what exquisite wisdom he manages, if I may so speak, between them and the Gentiles, with both of whom he at the time is jointly holding converse—claiming kindred with the one because of his office, and with the other because of his relationship. In short, unlike to the polemics of our modern day, and yet as uncompromising and bold as any of them—whenever an agreeable thing can be said, he says it—so that while, in truth and substance, he had the stern integrity of an old prophet when dealing with principles—he, in manner, had the pliancy and nice perception of an accomplished courtier when dealing with persons—and all this for the sake of the gospel, all for the purpose of gaining some.

Ver. 11.—'I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.' And so in this verse he hastens to inform them, and that with all promptitude and decision, that theirs was but a temporary stumble—what the stumblingblock was he had before told them*—not an irrecoverable fall. After laying his rebuke on the perversities of men, he looks onward with the eye of a prophet to the yet unfulfilled purposes of God, in whose hand men are but the instruments of His policy; and who causes even their very sins redound to His own glory, and subserve the accomplishment of all His pleasure. When as a preacher he views them morally, he connects these sins with the wickedness of man—when as a prophet he views them historically (for prophecy is but history in anticipation, or the history of the future), he looks to them in connexion with the sovereign power of God—first put forth at election by Him who ordains all, afterwards carried into effect by Him who worketh all in all throughout the successions of nature and providence. One of these successions he distinctly announces in the verse now before us, when he affirms the fall of the Jews to have been the salvation of the Gentiles—as if these two events stood related to each other in the way of cause and effect, or as antecedent and consequent. The same connexion he reasserts several times in certain clauses of the verses which follow, and which we may now single out, and thus save the necessity of our again adverting to them—as in the 12th verse, where we are told that the fall of the Jews was the riches of the world, and the diminution of them the riches of the Gentiles; and in the 15th verse, where we read that the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world; and in the 28th verse, where we learn, that by their treatment of the gospel they became the enemies of God for the sake of the Gentiles, to whose benefit therefore this rejection of the Jews was in some way subservient; and finally, in the 30th verse, which gives us expressly to understand, that through the unbelief of the Jews mercy was obtained by the Gentiles—all suggesting the idea of a metaphysical sequence, or of a connexion between these two events in the order of cause and consequence; and this again has set curiosity on edge to discover what the ligament could be which so bound together the infidelity of the Jews with the faith of the Gentiles, or what the operating influences were in the first which could bring the second in its train.

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* Rom. ix. 32; x. 3.

Now if God affirm that the two are thus linked together, it is our part so to believe it, whether all the cementing links and influences have or have not been submitted to our observation. We hold it the more necessary to premise this, because we think that with all men's powers of exploration, they have not been able thoroughly to unravel the process which intervenes between the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, and either the diffusion or acceptance of the same gospel among the other nations of the earth. It may have been partially but not fully explained, either in regard to the efficient or the final causes which are concerned in it—so that it remains in great part still a mystery in the counsels of God, of which the most we have to say is, that such is the will and the appointment of Him, our Almighty Sovereign. We must not expect, at least in our present state, that we shall ever so master the philosophy of the question, as to leave no room for the exclamation of the apostle, O the depth and unsearchableness of God's judgments, and how past finding out! Yet let us not forget that, in the language of Job, there are parts of His ways which do lie open to our observation, though it be indeed a little portion that we know of Him. And of His ways as of His works, it is well that they should be "sought out of all them who have pleasure therein" (Psalm cxi. 2)—as far as they are shone upon by the lights, whether of Scripture or of experience. Let us attend then a little to what these inquirers have got to say about this question, and what the fruit of the consideration which they have bestowed on it. There are certain palpable things which lie on the surface, as it were, of this hidden mystery, and which it were quite legitimate to notice.

Had Christianity been received by the great bulk of the Jewish nation, and had they in consequence been animated by that spirit of proselytism which essentially characterized it—a spirit heretofore new to them, though under its influence now they might have laboured for the diffusion of their new faith over the whole earth—still it might well be imagined, that coming as it would with one mind and by one effort, from the whole people, it was but a development of their old Judaism, still unchanged, or changed only in this, that, whereas it used to be tolerant though unsocial, it had now become restless and aggressive,—making inroads on all other countries which they had hitherto let alone. It might have been most plausibly conceived, that such a national enterprise, sanctioned by all the authorities of their state, as well as by the enthusiasm of a unanimous population, would have provoked a national resistance everywhere, and far more readily awakened the suspicion of those ambitious designs which would array every community whom they invaded, in an attitude of all the more resolute and prepared hostility against them. Nothing, it might with all seeming fairness be reasoned, could more effectually disarm this adverse imagination, than that the new religion should be carried abroad by a few persecuted outcasts, whom the Jews as a nation had disowned—a better vehicle surely for a religion which was to owe all its triumphs to the unaided force of principle and truth over the consciences of men. It was thus, in fact, that it first made way upon the earth—protected for a time, rather than withstood by the Roman authorities; and certainly not calling forth the whole power of the empire against it, till it had acquired a magnitude which alarmed the civil magistrate for the safety of existing institutions, but not at the same time till it had acquired a strength which weathered and survived all his efforts for its extermination. And as this great national resistance of the Jews, with the consequent dispersion over all countries both of Jews and Christians, acted most powerfully as second causes for the propagation of Christianity at its outset in the world—so it has further been contended, that to us who look retrospectively on past ages, the evidence for the truth of our religion is thereby presented in a far more impressive form than it would otherwise have been—the testimony of its first disciples being thus far more decisively tried, and found to be of purest stamp and quality, when thus delivered and thus persevered in before the presence of these resolute and implacable adversaries, who yet could not overthrow it, but who rather have contributed, and that mightily, to its strength, both as the depositaries, and the unexceptionable because hostile witnesses for the elder Scriptures of our faith, and so for all the corroborative argument, whether of doctrine or of prophecy, that is contained in them. And certain it is, that we have an evidence before our eyes in the present state of the Jews, which, but for their unbelief persisted in for so many centuries, we could not have appealed to—the evidence of their singular preservation, unprecedented in all other history, and bespeaking the special providence of God, both in upholding this wonderful people as a remnant of former revelations, and in reserving them for fulfilments and further evolutions in the scheme of the Divine administration which are yet to come. Altogether, it is a phenomenon charged with argument on the side of Christianity, and having in it all the power of a living voice, to rebuke, if not the infidelity, at least the neglect and heedlessness of those who look on the Bible and all its revelations as a thing of nought.

Such are some of the explanations which might be given of the actual footsteps of the Divine procedure in thus regulating the advances of Christianity throughout the world. Nor does it hinder but that they might be sound and good explanations, although they very much proceed on the natural influence of circumstances, as they were brought to bear upon human nature, such as it is. For though it lies within the power of God to overrule all the ordinary influences for the furtherance of His designs, yet we know it to be the general policy of His administration that He should be exceedingly sparing of any conflict with, or that there should be an exceeding rarity of deviations from, the laws and the regular processes which He Himself has established; and so, with the exception of a few select miracles to accredit His various revelations, it seems the rule of the Almighty's government that its purposes shall be carried into effect in the uniform course of things, and not by a series of violations of that uniformity. And thus it is that it comes within the philosophy of history to assign what the connexions and methods were by which the unbelief of the Jews opened a way for the gospel, and so as to speed its progress and acceptance among all other nations. But yet though in this way we may have a deal of valid and satisfactory reasoning on the relation or the subserviency of one event to another, under our existing economy of moral and physical causes—there remains unresolved, and we think in our present state unresolvable, the transcendental question, Why such an economy was instituted, so as to necessitate evil that good might follow, and so as to postpone for many centuries and generations the reign of universal virtue and happiness in the world? It is well for man to be made sensible of the limit within which his faculties are beset and encompassed, and so as to acknowledge with all his certainty of a thing that *so* it is, his own profound ignorance of *how* it is. Let our attempts then be successful as they may, to explain the actings and reactings of Jewish infidelity and Gentile faith upon each other, they must carry us at last to the inscrutable will of God; nor do they supersede that apostolic reflection which follows, and which we again anticipate, of—" O how unsearchable his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Yet with all this sense of a present darkness and a present difficulty, it is our unbroken confidence, that what we know not now we shall know afterwards, when we join in the triumphant song of eternity, " Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

'For to provoke them to jealousy.' But however unable to make out the whole meaning and mystery of this procedure by reasons of our own, yet when Scripture condescends to give a reason, we may adopt it with all safety, as part at least, if not the whole, of the explanation. The effect stated in this verse was predicted by Moses many centuries before (ch. x. 19). The calling of the Gentiles tended to provoke the Jews to jealousy or emulation; and the use of this, we are told by the apostle in the 14th verse, was, that it 'might save some of them.' And in future verses of this chapter the same thing is hinted at, as in verse 26th, where, after mention has been made of the fulness of the Gentiles to come in, it is represented that *so* all Israel shall be saved; and in verses 30th and 31st, where it is intimated, that in like manner as the unbelief of the Jews was the medium through which mercy comes to the Gentiles, so the mercy shown to the Gentiles was afterwards the medium through which mercy should come to the Jews; and the impellent cause for this result we gather from the clause now before us, even that the sight of Gentile Christianity had in it something which moved a desire on the part of the Jews after, and so as to turn them to the faith—when, no longer abiding in unbelief, they shall be again graffed into their own olive-tree (ver. 23).

We cannot say that we have seen much yet of the distinct operation of this motive among the children of Israel. Indeed, there has been little hitherto of conversion to Christianity among the Jews, when compared with the whole bulk and body of the people; but even in the individual cases of such conversion, we are not aware that the principle adverted to in the text has had much of an efficient or actuating influence, for bringing about this change from one religion to another. Before we could affirm this, we should require to know more the history of particular conversions, and have greater access to the minds of those who have undergone the transition, than we have had the privilege of enjoying. We cannot therefore say in how far the observation of Gentile Christianity, and of its good effects on those who had embraced it, has acted as a provocative on the Jewish mind, and impelled to such efforts and inquiries as may have led in more or fewer instances to the faith of the gospel. But as the great national conversion is yet to come, so we can anticipate how the motive specified in our text may gather strength with the lapse of time and in the course of successive generations. In the first place, their own hopes of the Messiah on whom they still calculate as a Prince and Deliverer yet to come, other than Jesus Christ the only Son of God, must every year become more languid; and at length, we should imagine, when all the periods of their computation have run out, must finally expire. And, in the second place, it lies with us to fulfil the part which is here assigned to the Gentiles. We should make Christianity the object of emulation and desire to the Jews and to all others, by our exemplification of it. Let us not wonder that this influence has hitherto come so little into play. This is not altogether owing to Jewish insensibility. The failure is ours—at least as much, if not more, than theirs. If their minds have not been excited to an attention or a respect or a longing after Christianity, it is because we have done so little, or done nothing at all, to excite them. The light of our religion has not so shone upon them as to make it glorious in their eyes. It may have told in the first ages, when the very heathen could exclaim, "Behold these Christians, how they love each other!" But it ought to be no surprise to us, that when

Christianity declined, this moral force, which the apostle ascribes to it, should decline also—so that men would cease either to imitate or admire it. This its constraining and attracting power is obviously discernible in apostolic times, as may be gathered from distinct and repeated traces in the book of Acts;* and perhaps for a century or two it may not have altogether expired. But we are not to marvel that we so entirely lose sight of it in the miserable degeneracies which followed—as in the Middle Ages, when, instead of their examples or their guides, Christians became their fierce and contemptuous persecutors; or even in the present times, when such a wretchedly inadequate exhibition is still made, either of the virtues of the gospel, or of its consequent effect on the peace and prosperity of men. We have indeed a mighty distance and declension to recover, ere we can make the Jews emulous to be what Christians are—whether by an exhibition of the grace and beauty which our faith imparts to the character of its individual professors, or of its beneficial influences on the wellbeing of society. Were they made distinctly to see what Christianity does for the virtue and happiness of men, we can understand how the principle of the text might, even at this day, come into powerful operation. But as it is, the sad imperfection of Gentile Christianity operates as a barrier in the way of Jewish conversion.

It is this which makes the task of a Christian missionary among the Jews all the more arduous; and lays an awful responsibility on us, if, instead of being instruments for the furtherance of the great design unfolded in this passage, by adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, we shall, by an opposite conduct, inflict a discredit and injury on the religion which we profess, and so as to hinder its progress in the world. We are here distinctly told by what sort of efficacy it is that the disciples of our faith, in the very act of being its patterns, may become its propagators among God's ancient people—even by the exhibition of its virtues, and so of the health and melody which dwell in the habitations of the righteous. Some devoted men there have been, the apostles of our modern day, who, single-handed, and with the force of the Christian argument, seconded by the demonstration of their own example, have, through the grace of God, effected genuine conversions here and there among the children of Israel. They have been the instruments of 'saving some' (ver. 14); but ere a general effect can be anticipated from this cause, there must be a far more general representation of the worth of Christianity—and that both in its family and social pictures, as well as in those occasional specimens which one person has given after another of its ennobling and beautifying influences on the characters of men. If we would be fellow-workers with God in His great and gracious designs for the recovery of the whole earth; and if we would not, as far as in us lies, incur the guilt of frustrating the objects of His Divine administration—it mightily concerns us how we should comport ourselves before the eyes of this select and peculiar nation, whom the Father of the human family at one time separated from all the people of the world, and for whom the highest moral destinies are yet in reserve. If it be through our mercy that they are to obtain mercy, let us remember that it is a mercy which saves us by "the washing of regeneration" (Tit. iii. 5); and that the graces of this regeneration must appear palpably and convincingly before their view, ere we can expect that we shall win them either to the love or admiration of the gospel. Did they but see the evidence of God being in the midst of us, whether in our preparation for the life that is to come, or in the promise which never fails to go along with these of the life that now is—did they but witness in bright exemplification on our persons the virtues of our holy religion, its exalted faith, its heaven-born charity, its unwearied patience under calumnies, its ethereal sanctity, and withal its gentleness of spirit and tenderness for everything which breathes—did they but observe the effect of these, not merely in gracing the individual possessor, but in upholding the spectacle of peaceful and well-ordered homes, of happy and harmonious neighbourhoods in every territory which Christianity blest and enlightened by its presence—did all this stand forth in manifest and undeniable contrast with the selfishness and impiety and moral degradation of their own acquaintances, the men of their own kindred—then should we be at no loss to understand how it is that Gentiles might provoke Jews to jealousy and emulation; and what the process was by which, through the mercy bestowed on the former, mercy at length accrued to the latter also.

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* Acts ii. 47; iv. 21; v. 13, 14, 26; vi. 7.

Such then is our part in this scheme of moral government, and such the mighty importance of our right bearing toward the Jews. We have a task and a duty laid upon us for the fulfilment of their restoration; and accordingly, the rest of the passage now on hand is mainly taken up with the manner in which we Gentiles ought to comport ourselves towards them. We shall therefore close our observations on the verses or clauses of verses which remain, by briefly noticing the points and proprieties of our incumbent conduct to the now scattered tribes of Israel.

No wonder then that the conversion of the Jews should all this while have been at a stand, when our treatment of them has for so many a long century been utterly and diametrically the reverse of that which the apostle here prescribes to us. Verily if the times once were when the Jews looked with intolerance and disdain on all the world besides, this has been amply repaid by the wholesale contempt and contumely which these outcast people have since received at the hands of all the nations. Truly we are in fault in having thus made them a reproach and a byword over the whole earth; and though the part we have acted be the fulfilment of a prophecy, this for us is no extenuation—any more than for the murderers of our Saviour, in that with wicked hands they did that which God had predetermined should be done. It would have been more godlike had we held them "beloved for their fathers' sakes" (ver. 28). The sacredness of their origin might well have given them some place of sacredness in our consideration. The descendants of such ancestors should have been honoured because of them—for 'if the root be holy, so are the branches' (ver. 16). So ought this latter clause of the verse to be understood—while as to the former clause, 'If the first-fruit be holy, the lump is also holy'—we incline to the view of those who regard the first-fruits as the first Jewish converts to the faith—to whom the apostle appeals as proof, because samples of the capabilities of the whole nation for readmission to the great spiritual family. Nay, he argues for their greater capability (ver. 24), seeing that they were the natural, and we only the exotic branches of the olive-tree which now bears us (ver. 17), they being by descent, and we by faith the children of Abraham, who is the father of the faithful, and from whom our Saviour, the Son of David according to the flesh, came. We are therefore told to boast not against the branches (verse 18), more kindred than we are to the root which bears us; and which, though for a time broken off, will at length be graffed in again. Our part meanwhile is to be more lowly and diffident of ourselves, and more reverential of the Jews: 'Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.'

Ver. 19-22.—'Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.' These verses are instinct with principle, the full exposition and enforcement of which would require a succession of sermons. We shall but state the leading ideas which they are fitted to suggest. This passage altogether is an argument by which the apostle would repress the arrogance of the Gentiles, because they now occupied the place which the Jews before monopolized; and what, with this view, he presses on their attention, is the tenure of that occupancy which they now gloried in—a tenure, the due consideration of which would annihilate all boasting, and lead them to carry with all humility and meekness the privileges wherewith they were invested. They held them altogether on the footing not of their own merits, but of another's goodness—and which goodness they can only continue in by the respect and reference of their minds towards it—for without such respect or reference there can be no faith, and it is by faith we stand. The whole distinction, whether of superior happiness or superior honour, conferred on us by the gospel, is exclusively and altogether of grace—not a thing worked for, but a thing given: And the precise office of faith is to receive it on this footing, to see and acknowledge it as a gift, and to depend for it on the truth and liberality and withal power of the Giver; trusting that what He had promised He was able and also willing to perform (ch. iv. 21). It is thus that faith essentially carries one out of himself, and by its very nature must, at every moment of its exercise, accredit another with the blessings which itself cannot earn, but only can appropriate as the fruit of a generosity from without. It is thus that faith necessarily excludes boasting, as much so as one antagonist principle must displace and exterminate the other which is opposed to it.* And thus also nothing could be more pertinently adduced to restrain the boasting of the Gentiles against the Jews—'against the branches'—than the consideration that themselves were standing only by faith, and that therefore they should not be high-minded, but fear.

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* Rom. iii. 27; Eph. ii. 8, 9.

But how, it may be asked, can faith and fear exist contemporaneously in the same bosom? Is not the one fitted to supplant the other? Is not faith or confidence allied with courage, rather than with timidity or terror? Does not faith work by love, and is it not said of perfect love that it casteth out fear? What then can be the object of the fear in my text?—a fear, it seems, which might co-exist with faith; for while the apostle tells these Gentiles that they can stand only by faith, he bids them at the same time not to be high-minded, but fear.

To these questions a reply might be given from two contiguous verses in the Epistle to the Hebrews—the last verse of the third, and the first verse of the fourth chapter. The Israelites were kept out of their promised land because of unbelief; and let us therefore fear that we, for the same reason, shall fall short of our promised land. The fear is, lest we fall away from the faith, lest we lose sight of its unseen objects, and so by an evil heart of unbelief depart from the living God. Nature is prone to forget the things of faith, and to lose all sight or sense of these in the objects of vision, and therefore is required to give earnest heed to these things, for fear she at any time should let them slip.* The man who, unable to swim, has fallen among the waves and had a rope thrown out to him, would know what it is to have faith and fear in contemporaneous operation within his heart: and in very proportion to his fearful distrust of himself, would he cling to the support that had been extended to him from above. The child who is beginning to walk, alike distrustful of his own strength, keeps firm hold on the nurse who leads him; and his faith and fear, so far from conflicting forces, work most harmoniously into each other's hands. And so the Christian, aware of there being no sufficiency in himself to withstand the temptations of an evil world, keeps fast and firm hold of that grace and sufficiency which he knows to be in God; and so the moral dynamics of the gospel will be found in perfect keeping with the machinery of the human constitution, with the laws and the working of man's moral nature.

The goodness and the severity of God, as brought into juxtaposition in the 22d verse, would require a treatment which we forego for the present, and more especially as we have made it the subject of a distinct sermon.† We recur to the apostle's argument respecting the Jews.

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* Heb. ii. 1.

† Sermon XVI. in vol. i. of "Congregational Sermons."

LECTURE LXXXVI.

ROMANS XI. 23-32.

"And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive-tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

THE general injunction to missionary work is comprehensive of Jews as well as Gentiles—"Go, preach the *gospel to every creature*." But the duty of labouring for the conversion of God's ancient people is furthermore laid on a distinct and special ground of its own. All that is said of them in Scripture serves to enhance the obligation of attempting, in every possible way, to find access among them for the doctrines and dispensation of the New Testament. This is an employment whereof we are told that the good of it will come back with double interest upon ourselves. Or rather, and without putting it into this selfish form, we learn from the Bible that the Christianity of the Jews will be followed up by a mighty enlargement in the character and state of Christianity throughout the world—so that in labouring for this, we become in a peculiar manner the fellow-workers of God, and instruments in His hand, for prosecuting and carrying forward to its fulfilment one of the highest objects of His administration. It were the most germinant of all our missionary enterprises—or the one most prolific of a rich moral blessing to the great family of mankind. The full return of the Jews will be the riches, we are told, of all other nations (verse 12); and by entering therefore on this peculiar walk, we may well be said to enter on the highest department of missionary labour, and in which we most harmonize both with the designs of Providence and the schemes of prophecy. The procedure of the first apostles in this respect might serve perhaps as a model for the apostolical work of our present day. They carried forth the gospel to all nations—yet beginning at Jerusalem. And into whatever city they entered, it was their general practice first to seek out the Jews—entering into their synagogues, and reasoning first with them out of their Scriptures.* And when Paul arrived a prisoner at Rome, the first thing he did was to send for the Jews. They seem still to have acted in the spirit of that charge which our Saviour while on earth gave to His disciples, when He bade them go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Nay, the apostles expressly alleged a necessity for this order—even that the word of God should first be spoken to the Jews before they turned to the Gentiles.† At that time the unbelief of the Jews was a stepping-stone to the faith of the Gentiles; and by their being first preached to, this unbelief came into open manifestation—which both served as an intimation for the apostles to desist, and seems not to have been without its influence on the new hearers to whom they then turned themselves.‡ But this period of Jewish unbelief is now drawing to a close: and by a sort of reverse law, it is the faith of that people which will now be the stepping-stone to a great and general expansion of Christianity among men. Surely then when the conversion of the Jews is so much more hopeful, the duty of preaching to them is not less imperative, and at least greatly more attractive than before—and especially now that the ulterior good is arrived at by a medium so much more bright and beautiful, than that through which the first teachers of Christianity had to find their way ere they came into contact with the Gentiles. Theirs was a rugged path, from the rejection of the gospel by their own countrymen, to the proclamation of it over a world where it was yet unknown; and ours, on the other hand, we should feel an inviting path, from the reception of this same gospel by the children of Israel, to the spread and the revival of it among all nations. It is such a receiving as will be life from the dead (ver. 15). Under all the views of it, the evangelization of the Jews should rank as a first and foremost object of Christian policy.

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* Acts xiii. 14; xiv. 1; xvii. 1, 2; xviii. 4, 5.

† Acts xiii. 46; xviii. 6.

‡ Acts xiii. 48.

And here it occurs to us, that the exceeding rarity as yet of Jewish conversion, so far from a reason for despairing of future success, should, if taken in connexion with the whole history of the case, lead rather to an opposite conclusion. It is through our mercy that they at length are to obtain mercy—or, through the medium of Gentile Christianity that the light of the gospel is to find entry into the hearts and understandings of this ancient people of God. We, whether by our example or our exertions, or both, are, somehow or other, to be the instruments of effecting this mighty change in the Jewish mind; and the question is, How have we acquitted ourselves in this capacity, or what has hitherto been our treatment of those who have thus been devolved on our custody and care, and of whom we may be said especially to have been put in charge? Looking then to this matter generally and historically through a succession of ages, we find this treatment to have been the very opposite of that which is here prescribed to us; and that, speaking in the gross, we have not only neglected the apostolic rule, but have actually reversed it—so that, instead of warming these outcasts of the Almighty's displeasure by our kindness, or conciliating them by our respect, or inspiring them with confidence by our justice, or awakening their admiration of the gospel by our exemplification of its virtues and graces, we, in the great bulk and majority of our proceedings, have brought all the opposite influences to bear upon them, and done everything we could to alienate and repel and put them to an impracticable distance away from us—acting the tyrants and persecutors of a forlorn race, who have become the veriest abjects or offscourings of humanity in our hands. We know that at length their heart is to turn to the Lord,* when they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as for a first-born. But to hasten onward this consummation we should turn from the evil of our way towards them, and mourn over all the insults and the wrongs which for two thousand years have been heaped on this people of noble ancestry and of still nobler destination. It might be looked on as a strange inference to draw from our almost total want of success hitherto—that on this retrospect of Jewish obstinacy and hatred of the gospel for so many ages, we should ground the bright and hopeful anticipation, not of a few individual conversions as heretofore, but of their national return to Him who is the Hope and Saviour of all the ends of the earth. But the inference is more sound and legitimate than it may be at first taken for. We count on this change of result in the Jewish mind, because we perceive a change in the causality which is brought to bear upon it. On looking back to the sullen inveteracy of Jewish prejudice for so many ages, we cannot but observe that the instrumentality wherewith it has been plied is not only not the same, but the very opposite to that which the apostle would have put into our hands—whereas on looking forward, we can perceive that a reverse influence is to be put in operation ; nor can we deem the conclusion to be illogical, when we reckon on the effect being different just from the cause being different. It is like the promise of a first and hopeful experiment, and to which we address ourselves with all the greater confidence, that, instead of some gratuitous or hap-hazard trial in the hands of a projector, the very means are to be now set agoing which are not only most fitted by nature to soften and disarm the antipathies of the human spirit, but which have been expressly sanctioned and enjoined in the oracles of a wisdom that is infallible. We speak not of the modern liberalism which but ministers to the secular pride and interest of this nation of aliens, and seeks for nothing further than their admission into courts and parliaments. We speak of the unutterable missionary longings now felt on their behalf, and of the efforts now making, not by single adventurers only, but by societies and whole Churches, to recall these hapless wanderers, and entreat them by every moving argument to come within the limits, and be honoured as at once the highest ornaments and best-loved inmates of the spiritual family of God. There is doubtless a wide contrast between our hopes of the future and our recollections of the past—but not wider than the contrast between our haughty, injurious, and oppressive treatment of the Jews then, and the meekness, the gentleness, the perfect frankness and sincerity, the heart-breathing desires after their salvation, the earnest and affectionate persuasion, the unwearied, we hope the unconquerable kindness wherewith they will now continue to be assailed, in the face, it may be, of discouragements and insults—all to tell at length, we trust, with the omnipotence of Christian charity giving forth the authentic exhibition of herself in the whole bearing and demeanour of the men who thus long and thus labour, not perhaps for their civil immunities and privileges, but for the glories of a higher citizenship, for their readmittance to the household of God, as the great and one thing needful—mightily to be striven, and mightily to be prayed for.

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* 2 Cor. iii. 16.

Thus, as the apostasy of the Jews led to the calling of the Gentiles, so will the Christianity of the Gentiles, when fully and consistently proceeded on, lead onward to the effectual recalling of the Jews. But the succession of benefits and blessings will not stop here—for, by a further step in the progress, will this conversion of God's ancient people to the truth as it is in Jesus operate by a mighty reaction, in the further extension and establishment of the gospel throughout the world. We have the traces, nay the distinct intimations of this, in more than one clause of the passage now before us—as in verse 12th, where we are told that the fulness of the Jews will augment the riches of the Gentiles; and in verse 15th, that the receiving of them will be life from the dead. We gather the same information from other Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament—as when Isaiah (lx. 3) tells us that "the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising;" and that the abundance of the sea, and the forces of the Gentiles, shall be converted and come unto Israel (ch. lx. 5), whose seed shall be known among the Gentiles; and all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which God hath blessed (ch. lxi. 9); for then will the Gentiles see their righteousness, and all kings their glory (ch. lxii. 2). This reflex influence, if it may be so termed, of Jewish upon Gentile Christianity, is still further intimated by the Psalmist as follows—"Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion," and "so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory" (Ps. cii. 13, 15). Hear also the prophet Jeremiah—"I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first, and cleanse them from all their iniquity: and it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, *which shall hear all the good that I do unto them*" (Jer. xxxiii. 7, 9). That the fulfilment of these prophecies is still to come, we may well conjecture from such passages as Isa. xliii. 18, 19; Jer. xvi. 14, 15; xxiii. 7, 8. But the conjecture advances to a certainty, by the quotation of the apostle in Rom. xi. 26, where he looks onward to the accomplishment as yet future of the glorious prediction of Isaiah (lix. 20)—"And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob"—the undoubted reference of Paul when he alludes to it as a thing *written*, that "there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

We have already tried in some slight degree to explain how it was, or what the connecting influences were, by which Gentile Christianity followed in the train of Jewish unbelief; and again, we have also said a little on the operation which this Gentile Christianity, when rightly exercised and fully manifested, should have in opening the eyes of the Jews, and so turning them to the faith. But there is still a third sequence in this progression of moral changes, whereof prophecy tells us that so it will be; and the curiosity of man prompts him, as in the other cases, to inquire, how it will be? And here, too, we can to a certain extent meet the inquiry—for it appears pretty obvious that a great national movement towards Christianity on the part of the Jews, and their actual adoption of a faith which they have so long held in detestation, must tell with mighty and decisive effect on the rest of the world. If the very existence of the Jews as a separate people be in itself the indication of a Providence—a singular event in history, which demonstrates the part taken by Him who overrules all history in the affairs of men—how much more impressive will the evidence become, when this same people shall describe the actual evolution which it was predicted they should do more than two thousand years ago; shall, after the dispersions and the desolations of many generations, reach at last the very landing-place to which the finger of prophecy has been pointing from an antiquity so high as that of the patriarchal ages. We know not if this splendid era is to be ushered in by palpable and direct miracle. We would not affirm this, but far less can we deny it. But should there be no such manifestation of the Divine power conjoined with this marvellous fulfilment, there will at least be such a manifestation of the Divine knowledge, as will incontestably prove that God has had to do with it; and so as that history shall of itself perform the office of revelation, or men will trace the finger of the Almighty in the events which are sensibly passing before their eyes. And besides, we have reason to believe of these converted Jews, that they will become the most zealous and successful of all missionaries; or, like Paul before them, the preachers of that faith which they persecuted in times past, and once laboured to destroy.* It is said of a single Christian that he may be the light of the world;* how much more will be a whole nation of Christians—glowing in the full ardour of their new-born convictions with apostolic fervour, and the very fruit of whose conversion will tell with a hundred-fold greater effect than even that of St. Paul as a testimony or evidence for the faith. Verily like him, their great prototype, they will pre-eminently and emphatically be the apostles of the Gentiles; and there will be a light to lighten these Gentiles in the very glory of the people of Israel.† We must look to futurity for this great accomplishment—for, most obviously it has not yet been realized. It will be in the last days that "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." This is all yet to come—else how could it be spoken, as an immediate sequence of its fulfilment, that "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. ii. 2-4; Mic. iv. 2).

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* Gal. i. 23.

But, after all, we are but attempting an explanation of the efficient causes in this process—which, though fully and satisfactorily made out, would still leave the final cause of the whole an unresolved mystery. We may be able to follow and understand every step of a mechanism which has been set up for the production of a given result—yet not understand the meaning of the result itself, and still less the reason why such a process should have been instituted, rather than any other, for the purpose of making it good—especially if it be a process which involves in it the perdition, endless and irremediable, of the millions and millions more of many generations. The difficulty is aggravated a thousand-fold when the Author and Originator of the whole is a Being of infinite power, but a power under the direction of infinite goodness and wisdom—prone as we are to wish, and therefore to imagine, that He may have willed—and by the energies which belong to Him, have also brought forth an instant creation of perfect light and perfect virtue, and secured it against all the inroads by which either wickedness or wo could have ever entered. This is the mystery of God—not the glorious consummation of a regenerated world, but the deep-laid necessity for the evil which preceded it; and why it had to be reached by so long and dark and laborious a pathway, strewn as it were with the ruins of many successive ages. The origin of evil comes into view while we meditate on these things; and the difficulties of this transcendental question serve still more to beset and baffle our ambitious speculations.

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* Matt. v. 14.—See much that is interesting on this whole subject in Bickersteth's "Restoration of the Jews."

† Luke ii. 32.

It may be felt by some to alleviate, though most certainly it does not resolve the mystery, if we can state some analogy between the process laid down in this chapter and other parts or passages in the history of the Divine administration. For example, the apostle elsewhere tells us of the law having entered "that the offence might abound" (Rom. v. 20). It looks inexplicably hard, that the law, or aught whatever, should have come directly from God for such a purpose—or that sin might be multiplied: But the difficulty seems to be at least mitigated, if not wholly done away, when the apostle further tells us, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"—a grace all the more illustrious, it is certain, from the magnitude and enormity of that guilt over which it triumphed. Nay, we are told of another great moral design which was accomplished by sin being thus placed in connexion with the law—"that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. vii. 13)—as if the worth and excellence of that which is good, and the exceeding deformity of that which is evil, were by juxtaposition brought into more bright and vivid manifestation. And the case before us looks like another specimen of the same thing—characteristic of the Divine administration; and in keeping with, or in the style of its general policy. He had first illustrated the mercy of the gospel, and all the more palpably by its taking effect at least chiefly and primarily on the Gentiles, wholly given over to idolatry, and disfigured by all the atrocities of human wickedness—rather than on the decent, formal, well-seeming Jews, the professing worshippers of one God; whose vices, of a more deep and subtle and spiritual character, did not glare so on the eye of general observation. But these, in their turn, and after ages of seemingly hopeless alienation, during which they acquit themselves with all the despite and defiance and resolved hardihood of outlaws—on these, obviously reared by Providence for some of its high designs, shall we yet behold the second great illustration of gospel mercy; all the more enhanced, it is certain, by its breaking forth in the train of Jewish perversity and Jewish unbelief, at length giving way, after they had stood their ground and been distinctly persisted in for many generations. This is one undoubted effect of His having concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all (ver. 32). The one, so to speak, is set off by the other—like the effect of light and shade in painting, or when any object in nature is seen all the more strikingly and conspicuously because of the dark ground on which it is projected. In a school of virtue, one chief end is the enforcement of great moral lessons; and this perhaps were best effected by bringing out in boldest possible relief the evil of sin, and in all their beauty and brightness the characteristics of highest moral perfection; or, which is tantamount to this, the high and holy attributes of Him in whom all perfection as well as all power have had their everlasting dwelling-place. Now providence is pre-eminently a school of virtue; and we may therefore expect that history, and in a more especial manner, sacred history, where the manifestations of providence are seen in nearest connexion with the designs of grace, will abound in such lessons. And accordingly, such is the manifest purpose of many revealed evolutions or passages in the history of the Divine administration, of God's dealings with the world. We have already noticed that a law was brought in, and for the purpose that sin might become (or might appear) exceeding sinful—like a foul blot on a tablet of resplendent purity. And though in the form of a question, yet it is no obscure hint which is conveyed when Paul asks, Whether it might not be God's will to *show* His wrath, His righteous indignation at moral evil, and to make His power *known*—when He destroys those vessels of wrath which he had before "endured with much long-suffering" (Rom. ix. 22). And in like manner would we infer, that it is to exhibit the Divine character in another of its phases, even the riches of His glory—specified in Eph. i. 6 as the glory of His grace—when we read that, also after much long-suffering it may be—the long-suffering which is termed 'salvation' by the apostle Peter*—He heaps His choicest preferments and blessings on the vessels of mercy, and thus *makes known* the riches of His glory.† One main end of the Divine policy in the government and final destiny of men seems to be manifestation—that both heaven and earth might learn thereby the more to hate all evil, to love and admire all worth and goodness and true greatness, whether in themselves or as exemplified by Him in whom all greatness and goodness are personified. In harmony with this view, we read of the Lord Jesus being *revealed* with His mighty angels, on that dread occasion when the glory of His power and sacredness shall be displayed in the destruction of sinners; and the glory of His infinite love for the holy, in the triumph and happiness of the saints.* And so His disposal of the Church does not terminate in but has an ulterior object to itself—even "to the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, *might be known*, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God." There is evidently here a something pointed at beyond the immediate concern which men have in the Divine procedure, a reference to the distant as well as to the future; and our felt ignorance of this larger and more comprehensive policy should serve to humble and chasten and repress our ambitious speculations. Yet though we see but in glimpses, we cannot fail to discern in Scripture the traces of a constant respect to manifestation as one great drift or design of God's universal government—and that, too, the manifestation of contrasts, or of things made more striking and conspicuous in themselves by being presented along with their opposites. So essentially and characteristically indeed is holiness a repugnance to moral evil, that some have been satisfied with this as a sufficient reason for the enigma of its existence—that but for the reality, or at least the conception of evil, there could have been no exhibition of that jealous and invincible recoil from sin, wherewith perfect virtue must ever regard the opposite of itself. For our own parts, we can profess no absolute satisfaction with any of the solutions which have been proposed of these high mysteries. We look upon them all as hypothetical, and yet of use, because fully adequate to the work of silencing, and so placing in abeyance the infidelity alike hypothetical which has been grounded on the questions wherewith they deal. The real and effective evidence for the truth of the Christian revelation is thus left uninjured; and while we gladly accept of these friendly explanations for all that they are worth, we cannot view them to be so complete as to leave no sense of a difficulty yet unfathomable, and no room for the apostolic reflection—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

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* 2 Pet. iii. 15.

† Rom. ix. 23.

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* 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

But we ought now to enter on a separate treatment of those few verses in the passage which may require any explanation. We must forbear the consideration of such prophetic views as are here suggested, and to which full justice could only be rendered in a distinct work.

Ver. 25.—'In part.' So great a part as to impress a cursory observer with its totality. It was not just this however—for a certain though very small proportion of the whole nation had been converted. Paul gladly avails himself of this, that he may be enabled to characterize the blindness as only partial, and so be allowed to soften, as his manner is, the representation which he here gives, to those Jews whom he is addressing in this epistle, of the unbelief of their countrymen.—'Until,' or 'during,' or 'while.' The season of Jewish unbelief will be that of Gentile conversion. We could not from this single verse infer, that contemporaneously with the restoration of Israel there was to ensue a remarkable enlargement of general Christianity in the world. This idea, however, might well be suggested by the expression, especially when taken in connexion with other parts of the chapter and other prophecies of the Bible. Apart from these, the fulness might be understood to mean not the great number who were to come in, but the whole number who should be converted, whether that number was great or small. The blindness was to continue while the elect among the Gentiles were gathering,* be they few or many; or till all such of them as were ordained to eternal life should believe; or, more generally still, "until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled." This leaves the extent of conversion among the Gentiles undetermined, and also leaves us at liberty to judge whether, while there is reason to believe that about the time when the Jews are brought in there will be a great enlargement in the general Christianity of the world, that enlargement is to precede the Jewish conversion, or the Jewish conversion is to precede the enlargement. We are inclined to believe that, looking to these two events in the order of cause and effect, they will have a great reciprocal influence on each other, or that there will both be an action and a reaction. If it be a likelihood, on the one hand, that Gentile Christianity, when purified in its quality and made larger in its amount, shall, both by the exhibition of its graces and the efforts of its missionary zeal, tell with great and sensible effect on the obstinacy of Jewish unbelief—the likelihood is not less, that when a movement is once made on the part of these heretofore resolved aliens to the truth as it is in Jesus, it will tend mightily to open the eyes of all nations, so as to impress millions and millions more in favour of that gospel whose predictions shall then be so illustriously verified, and to which so impressive a testimony will be given, when its most inveterate, and for a long period its most hopeless enemies, shall, after the lapse of many generations, look in mourning and bitterness to Him whom their forefathers had pierced, and, casting away their weapons of rebellion, shall fall down to worship Him.

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* Mark xiii. 27.

But our further remarks on particular verses we must postpone to the next lecture.

LECTURE LXXXVII.

ROMANS XI. 26-36.

"And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

VER. 26.—'All Israel.' Some would interpret the clause thus—All of Israel who are to be saved. All of them who are ordained to eternal life. There is as much of force in these interpretations as to make it possible, nay we think even likely, that the meaning here of the word 'all' is not such an absolute and entire totality as to include each and every one of the nation at the time of their predicted conversion. Yet something more must be conveyed by the term than that merely all the elect were to be saved—for, whether many or few, this holds true of them in every age. The 'all' must be held to denote so general a conversion as should amount to a national one; and as the 'part' in the verse foregoing signifies 'some,' though so very few as to make an insensible fraction of believers among the Jewish people—so the 'all' of the verse before us signifies at least so many as should form a great corporate change from Judaism to Christianity, and so as to leave the unbelievers, if any, but an insensible fraction of the whole.

'*Out* of Sion.' The passage referred to is Isa. lix. 20—where the prophet represents the Deliverer as coming to Sion, while the apostle represents Him as coming from Sion. These two inspired men reveal to us a glimpse of one and the same process, though at different but perhaps nearly if not altogether contiguous parts of it—the one stating a previous ingress of the Saviour to Jerusalem, the other a consequent egress in the prosecution of His great undertaking. The light of prophecy here, as in many other instances, only permits us to contemplate the event as a general reality, without enabling us to enter on very full or explicit details of it. Its still undoubted futurity, however, is manifest from this—its being spoken of in the language of prediction both in the Old Testament and in the New; and in its being a prediction which has not had the semblance of a fulfilment since the days of the apostles.

Ver. 27.—'For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.' The conversion intimated here is described in substantially the same terms in Jer. xxxi. 33, 34, and in Heb. viii. 8-12; x. 16, 17. It consists of the same steps, and is attended with the same blessed results all the world over; and in every instance, whether of Jew or Gentile, who is turned to Christianity. The taking away of their sins in this passage seems a blotting out of the guilt incurred by their transgression of God's laws—as equivalent to what in the other passages is said to be a remembrance (in judgment) of their sins and iniquities no more. The turning away of their ungodliness is their sanctification, even as the other was their justification; and it is equivalent to what is spoken of elsewhere, as a putting of those laws—from the condemnation of having broken which they were delivered—of putting those laws into their hearts, and writing them in their minds. The covenant with each individual believer is one and the same, in all ages and among all nations.

Ver. 28.—'As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.' Their being enemies for the gospel's sake, points to the subservience of Jewish infidelity as the instrument of diffusing Christianity through the world. We know that historically the rejection of the gospel by the Jews was followed up by its large and rapid furtherance among the Gentiles; nor can we doubt that this passage in the administration of God's providence had its deep-laid reasons, whether we fully comprehend them or not, in the counsels of the Divine policy.—Again, their being beloved for the fathers' sake, points to the regard which God had for Abraham, and to the promise which He made this patriarch, even in the form of a reward for his faithfulness—that He would signalize his posterity, and make them a blessing to the nations of the earth.* This is analogous to other instances in the procedure of the Almighty's government—as when for the sake of David and other good kings, He continued His favour to Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah.†

And yet this final salvation of the Jews, though thus holding on the worthiness of their fathers, holds also on election, and so on the sovereignty of God. It is as touching the election that they are beloved for the fathers' sake. To those who have made a profound study of this arduous topic, there will appear no discrepancy between these two things: and indeed their perfect harmony is often as obvious to the wisdom of a plain Christian, as it is to the man of philosophic discrimination. There is no incompatibility whatever between the order of an administration being fixed, and fixed from all eternity, and yet its being a moral administration. Whether a process be absolute and irreversible is one question; what the special terms of that process are, or what the footsteps in it which follow each other, is another. It is the latter question which determines the character of the process; and should the former question be resolved in the affirmative, this, so far from changing or giving uncertainty to the character of the process, only rivets and makes it the more sure. Give me a process all the parts and connexions of which are bound together by an adamantine necessity, and this hinders not that in the laws and tendencies and particular sequences of such a process we may read both its own character and the character of Him who has ordained it—and all the more distinctly and surely, if the process be indeed unalterable. If in any human government the deed of virtuous patriotism were generally followed up by the acknowledgment of a public reward—this might serve to characterize it as being on the whole a virtuous government; and surely it would not dilute, but rather stamp and confirm this character the more, if, instead of being thus followed up *generally*, it were so followed up *always*. In like manner, if, under the Divine government, goodness were always followed up in the long-run by enjoyment; and righteousness, though even after a series of discouragements in the way of trial, by happiness and honour; and holiness by heaven; and, in a word, the regeneration of every creature into a state of perfect moral excellence, by his secure and immortal wellbeing—no one could question the title of such a government to the highest moral reverence, and a title all the more firmly established, if these several effects followed in the train of their respective causes with the unexcepted constancy of an order that never changed. We are aware of certain transcendental difficulties, which we forbear to grapple with; but assuredly the task of harmonizing the character of an administration as being of perfect moral goodness, with the characteristic of its strict and rigorous and irrevocable necessity, is not one of them—even though a necessity settled and ordained in the counsels of the Almighty from everlasting. And thus particularly might the future and final salvation of the children of Israel be viewed both as the fruit of a primeval decree of election, and as at once the fruit and the reward of the obedience of Abraham. The first does not supersede the second; nay, the second is one of the stepping-stones along which the first is carried, and will at length be made good. Nay, it will require another great stepping-stone ere the decree is consummated—a work of grace in the hearts of Abraham's children; their turning to the Lord, that the veil which now blinds them might be taken away;* their deep and mournful penitence, and that worked in them by the Spirit of God;† and lastly, their abiding not in unbelief, and their ungodliness being turned away.

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* Gen. xxii. 16; Lev. xxvi. 42; Deut. iv. 37.

† 1 Kings xi. 13, 36.

Ver. 29.—'For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.' That is, repentance on the part of God. What He hath resolved, He shall certainly fulfil. "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" His original purpose, and promise too, respecting the children of Israel, in His own good time will be accomplished; and the necessary gifts will then be imparted, as well as the necessary calling brought to bear upon them for carrying it into effect. This calling as being in execution of the decree of election, must of course be internal and efficacious—as distinguished from the ordinary and outward calling, such as that wherewith they were plied at the time of the Saviour, and which then proved ineffectual, the things belonging to their peace being hid from their eyes. At the calling of our text their eyes shall be opened, and they shall behold Him whom they have pierced, and say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39).

Ver. 30, 31.—'For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.' It is obvious, as we have already said, that there was a connexion, and that too in the way of promotion and subserviency, between the unbelief of the Jews and the Christianity of the Gentiles. This is again affirmed in the verse before us; and a sort of parallelism founded on it between the respective changes already experienced in part, and to be completed afterwards, on these two great divisions of the human family. What the Gentiles had been in times past when they believed not, the Jews were now. The Gentiles passed out of their former unbelief, and obtained mercy through the unbelief of the Jews. The Jews will pass out of their present unbelief, and obtain mercy, not through the unbelief of, but through the mercy bestowed upon the Gentiles. We can see how the grace of God is magnified by a mercy bestowed on men previously in a state of rebellion and apostasy. Its display is all the more illustrious, in that it is shed forth on men in a state of resolute hostility or of deep and settled alienation, rather than on men in a state of expectancy and desirousness of the blessings from heaven which they need; and so it serves to brighten and enhance the character of Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor ways as our ways—that His mercy should thus descend on places the darkest and most repulsive, whether on the depravity of the heathen world or on the obstinacy and perverseness of the children of Israel.*

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* 2 Cor. iii. 16.

† Zech. xii. 10, 11.

The analogy between the two cases of the Jews and Gentiles, is, that each shall at length have obtained mercy—making transition thereunto from their own previous state of unbelief. The distinction is, that the Gentiles arrived at their blessing through the unbelief of the Jews: the Jews will arrive at theirs through the mercy before shown to the Gentiles. One can perceive how the Jews might have been confirmed in their arrogant, exclusive, and unsocial spirit, had Christianity sprung up amongst them, and taken possession of their nation under the direct and immediate influence of our Saviour's teaching, the Author and Finisher of our faith. It might then have come forth upon the world as Judaism perfected, and in such a way as, instead of humbling the Jews, might have inflamed still further their extravagant sense of superiority over all the other nations of the earth. But coming as it will through the medium of a previous

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* Rom. v. 8, 10.

Gentile Christianity, this strong national partiality, this fond and rooted prejudice of many ages, may at length give way—when, so far humbled as to take from us that true religion in the attitude of recipients, which otherwise they might have conferred on us in the attitude of dispensers. It is thus, perhaps, that by a lengthened course of preparation, the training of a spiritual husbandry carried onward through a series of centuries, the world may come to be matured for the establishment within its limits of one great spiritual family—" where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

Ver. 32.—There may be reason to believe from other passages and other prophecies in Scripture, that there remains to be yet revealed an infidel antichrist, and so a general falling away from the gospel among the nations of Christendom; but this is not one of these passages. The unbelief in which God hath concluded all, is first the unbelief of the Gentile world before the promulgation of the gospel, out of which they then emerged into Christianity; and second, the present unbelief of the Jews, out of which they also will emerge into Christianity when the time of their restoration comes. It is the present unbelief of the Jews which is spoken of in this verse; but it is the past, and not a future unbelief of the Gentiles which is there spoken of. It is thus that the apostle adjusts and balances, and if I may so say, equalizes the account between the Jews and Gentiles—a main topic with him, from the commencement and throughout the whole of his epistle. He had before spoken of their common vices. He now speaks of their common infidelity—that, after representing both as having fallen into one and the same abyss, he might reconcile both to one and the same method of recovery; and, along with this, establish the great doctrine of justification by faith as the common and equal footing on which both are taken into acceptance with God. The whole of his argument, whilst intended to harmonize the two parties into one, is fitted also to humble each of them, and especially the Jews. Yet one cannot fail to perceive how studious he is of mitigating to the uttermost the painfulness of his demonstration—that he might "give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, but please all men in all things, not seeking his own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved." In the execution of this task, he acquits himself with a tact and a delicacy and an address altogether worthy of the most accomplished courtier—yet only with the skill of this profession, and not with its duplicity; for on the ground of principle, and when aught of truth had to be defended or of error to be rebuked and put down, none more resolute in assertion or more fearless in remonstrance than Paul. This union of an uncompromising firmness with a delicacy the most sensitive, we had almost said the most tremulous, lest unnecessary violence should be done to the feelings of other men—we have always held to be a leading character in the mind and manner of this great apostle.

Ver. 33, 34.—'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?' It were well to discriminate the precise sentiment of that sublime effusion wherewith the apostle here concludes and sums up the whole of this contemplation. We should say in the general, that they are the natural rather than any of the moral attributes of the Divinity, which have evoked it. It is not of His mercy that the apostle now makes mention; nor yet of His justice; nor yet of His unswerving truth or fidelity; nor yet of His holiness or dread antipathy to sin. They are His wisdom and knowledge, and the depth of the riches of these, which he celebrates in this place; and the unfathomable mystery, both of His counsels and processes; and lastly, the absolute and entire ownership, and therefore disposal or sovereignty which God has of creation—seeing that He is at once the origin and the end of all things. It is true that His judgments, if not His ways, stand related to the principles of His righteous administration—yet here they are not spoken of as righteous, but simply and generally as inscrutable. The jurisprudence of a lawgiver cannot be appreciated rightly, save by a reference to its moral character—which, indeed, is the most important element of all in the reckoning. But the very thing affirmed here respecting the jurisprudence of Him who is the great Lawgiver of heaven and earth, is, that in our present state at least it is not appreciable by us, that it is beyond our reckoning; and though a time be coming when "the mystery of God shall be finished" (Rev. x. 7), and we shall be enabled to say, not only "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty," but "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints," and "thy judgments are made manifest"—yet now must we join the apostle in the utterance of our text—"How unsearchable are these judgments, and these ways how past finding out!"

In attending to what that specifically was which called forth this high exclamation from the apostle, we cannot but feel that we are not altogether in a fit state fully to sympathize with him. The events which thus excited him to reflection have been too long familiar to us. And this rejection of the Jews, or admission of the Gentiles, or even reunion of both into one faith and one family—so long as but read of in prophecy, and not yet seen in living fulfilment—these as little move us, as do any of those great historical changes which have long passed over the world, and are now as current as household words in the pages of well known authorship. But we must not estimate from our indifference now, the effect which such a revolution then must have had, and especially in all the force and freshness of its novelty on a Jewish understanding—before the wonder and recency of the great passing changes had subsided; or men, with the education and prejudices of an Israelite, had recovered from the sensation of that violence inflicted on all their previous habitudes of thought and feeling, when God abandoned His ancient people, and made proffer to all men of those blessings and distinctions which till now had been exclusively theirs. And there was something more in it than a reversal to excite surprise. There was an enlargement which must have served mightily to expand the mental perspective, particularly of those Christian Jews who had just cast off the limitations that so fettered and confined the general understanding of their countrymen. It was a transition from the local to the universal. This enlargement of view from a country to a world in the economy of the Divine word, was fitted to awaken and amplify the mind of its admiring observers —just as a few centuries ago, when in the economy of the Divine workmanship the mystery of these sensible heavens was laid open, and the human mind made its large and lofty transition from the view of a world to the view of a universe. Relatively to the state of previous conception at each of these periods, there is a striking similarity between them; and the respective discoveries, the one moral or spiritual, the other natural, are fitted to beget a like sense of greatness—whether in the objects contemplated, or in the magnificent designs of Him whose government reaches to all ages and embraces all worlds. It was a mighty stretch at the earlier of these periods, when the view was carried forward from a single nation to the whole human family;

and mightier still at the later of them, when carried forward from the earth we live upon to the vast, and for aught we know, the boundless assemblage of those suns and systems which astronomy hath unfolded. The mind of the apostle seems, in the passage now before us, to have fully shared in the first of these expansions, and even elsewhere to have bordered, nay, actually to have entered on the second of them—when on this very theme of a one Christianity for Jews and Gentiles, he tells us of Him from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, and by whom all things were created, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; and then gives us to know of this evolution in the government and history of the Church, that it was meant as an illustration to the whole universe of the manifold wisdom of God.*

But these are reflections on the greatness rather than on the incomprehensibility of the King eternal and immortal—on the riches and extent of His creation, rather than on the mysteriousness of His government; and bespeak more the admiration of a magnificence beyond all our previous conceptions, than our wonder in the contemplation of depths and difficulties utterly beyond our present understanding. Now it is not mere expansion in the field of view which calls forth or exhausts the whole sentiment of this passage—as the adoption, for example, of a whole species, instead of but the people of a single nation, into one and the same spiritual family. It is not so much the magnitude of the result, as the rationale of the process, which engages and baffles the mind of the apostle; and which therefore he pronounces to be unsearchable and past finding out. It is the selection of one household from a world left in darkness and alienation from God—it is the committal to them of the Divine oracles, and the preservation among their descendants of the true knowledge and worship of the Deity—it is the history of this singular people, through whom was kept up the only remaining intercourse between heaven and earth; and which was finally broken off, after the dealing of many centuries, in the various forms of chastisement at one time and of mercy or endurance at another, till the perversities of stiff-necked and rebellious Israel could be no longer tolerated, and the things of peace and salvation were henceforth hidden from their eyes—it is, contemporaneously with the rejection of Jews, the call of the Gentiles, just awoke from the profound lethargy of ages, during which the millions of unvisited and unblest heathenism were suffered to perish in their iniquities—and then, to close the enumeration, it was the prospect still at the time of Paul of another dreary, nay, a double millennium of exile and moral wretchedness for his own outcast countrymen, ere the goodly consummation should arrive, or the latter-day glory was to shine forth on a then happy and regenerated earth,—these are the eventful changes in the contemplation of which the mind of our apostle seems to be labouring, as if the footsteps of a series which he felt himself unable to trace, or at least unable to account for. And certainly to us it does look inexplicable, that the same God who could will as we imagine into present effect an instant and universal blessedness—that He should rather choose to compass the fulfilments of His wisdom and goodness by so lengthened, so laborious a pathway. The difficulty is a thousand-fold aggravated when we think of the failures, the abortions, the woful and wide-spread degeneracies, lighted up by intervals few and far between of the good or the beautiful in the moral history of the world. We cannot but wonder at such a preparation being right or necessary ere the secure, the everlasting empire of truth and righteousness shall be ushered in. And yet these are parts of a scheme, and of a scheme in progress, reaching forward to a great and glorious accomplishment, though by initial stages of darkness, depravity, and disorder, the full meaning or effect of which we cannot comprehend. They are the deep-laid movements of a policy to us inscrutable; and as we have just borrowed an analogy from one of the sciences, we may here avail ourselves of another, and point to the yet hidden enigma of those successive creations which geology has unfolded, and which prove the developments both of animal and spiritual existence to be alike inexplicable. There is the profoundest mystery in both; and whether we try to explore the moral or the physical departments of His administration, it is good to feel the infinity of our distance from Him "whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known" (Ps. lxxvii. 19). 'For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?'

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* Col. i. 16; Eph. iii. 10, 15.

Ver. 35, 36.—'Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.' These verses strike at the root of that lofty pretension which it is the great aim of the apostle to overthrow—that of man having any rightful claim upon God, who is at once the origin and the end of all things. To Him we owe not all the objects of enjoyment merely, but all our capacities of enjoyment. This is a theme too big for utterance, and more to be dwelt upon in thought than dilated on in language—the entire subordination of the creature to the Creator, of the thing formed to Him who hath formed it, by whose care it is that we consist or keep together, and whose right hand upholds us continually. It is our part even here, and in the dimness of our present embryo being, to award Him all the glory. This will be the song of our eternity, when we shall see Him as He is, and know even as we are known.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

ROMANS XII. 1, 2.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

VER. 1.—'By the mercies of God.' Those mercies of which he had just spoken as alike applicable both to Jews and Gentiles, whom he now addresses as the subjects of a common discipleship, and under the common title of brethren. The style of his address is eminently fitted to conciliate the men with whom he had just been holding what at least one class of them might have felt to be a somewhat stern and repulsive argument. As his manner is, he omits no lawful expedient by which to disarm the repugnance of his pupils to aught which might prove hard or distasteful in the reasonings which he employs; and so he stands before them not in the attitude of a master to school them into submission, but of a friend and fellow-disciple, to supplicate their gifts and services at the altar of their common Christianity. At this part he makes the transition from doctrine to practice; and on the groundwork of those mercies which he had just demonstrated, tells them what the returns are which are expected at their hands. That gospel mercy which proclaims so full an indemnity for the past, is flagrantly misunderstood by those who conceive of it as holding out a like full exemption from the toils of a future obedience—instead of which there cannot be imagined the more entire renunciation of an old habit and an old will than that which takes place, and takes place invariably, in the economy under which we sit. And there is no dispensation from it. The covenant of works began with service and ended with reward. The covenant of grace begins with mercy and ends with service; and most certainly a service not short of the former, either in the universality of its range over the whole domain of our moral nature, or at length with every single disciple in the school of Christianity, in the tale and measure of his performances. And can any subordination be more complete than that which is proposed in these verses?—and proposed too on the ground of those mercies, or because of them (*therefore*), as the rightful and proper return to God for the benefits of this new dispensation. We are called on to present our bodies a 'sacrifice'—not by giving them to be burnt, as were the slain carcases of the Jewish offerings, but to present them 'a living sacrifice;' or, in other words, not by the extinction of our animal life, but by the utter mortification of all that is evil or forbidden in our animal desires, which, if not the death of the body, is at least the death of that which was formerly dear to it even as life itself. The voluntary surrender of that in which the chief enjoyment of life consisted, is a self-denial, or rather a self-infliction, which, if not equivalent, is at least analogous to a literal sacrifice of the person, and is thus denominated in various parts of Scripture; and certainly it may require a strength of resolution as great as that exhibited in the martyrdoms whether of principle or of patriotism. And accordingly we read of being "crucified with Christ," of them that are His having "crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts," of our being "buried with him in baptism," of our "being made conformable unto his death," of our putting off by a circumcision "the body of the sins of the flesh," of our being "baptized into his death."* There is nothing surely in these expressions to countenance the immoralities or the indolence of antinomianism; and we may well understand how that, to be carried into effect, "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. xi. 12). Truly it is not by a slight or easy process, by a listless seeking after life, that we shall make good our entry thereinto, or work out our salvation; but by dint of a hard and laborious striving, so very hard and far above the powers of nature that it needs the working of that grace which worketh in us mightily.†

It is no more a literal sacrifice that we are called to, than was Paul's a literal crucifixion, when he tells us that he was crucified with Christ. Nevertheless he lived. Yet, to signify the actuating power which thus enabled him to stifle and overbear the strongest and most urgent importunities of nature, he further says that it was not he, but Christ, who lived in him; and still more to explain the principle or rationale of this great achievement, he lets us know that his life—(for the crucifixion he underwent did not, as in the case of the Saviour, imply any surrender of this life)—that the life which he lived in the flesh was a life of faith on the Son of God—and he adds, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." Let us in like manner take the same firm hold on the sure mercies of David—the identical mercies of our text; and on the strength of this confidence or faith which overcometh the world, we shall accomplish the same victory and make good the same sacrifice which it was the incessant labour of his life to perfect in the sight of God. Let the grace of Christ rule in our hearts, and then sin will no longer have the dominion over us. If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but keep under our bodies and so bring them into subjection—keep them in sanctification and honour—keep them with that holy guardianship which is due to the temples of the Holy Ghost;—and finally, to complete the surrender, or merge our will wholly into God's will, we shall not be satisfied with one act of self-denial; but, making it the symbol and earnest of a universal obedience, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we shall do all to the glory of God. The supremacy ascribed to Him at the end of the last chapter is universal; and, in keeping with this, the submission laid upon us at the commencement of this chapter is universal also.

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* Gal. ii. 20; v. 24; Col. ii. 11, 12; Phil. iii. 10; Rom. vi. 3.
† Luke xiii. 24; Col. i. 29.

And this is a sacrifice which may well be called 'holy'—a term properly expressive of separation. The best and indeed the prescribed way of keeping down the appetencies of the body, is to keep at a distance from the objects which excite them. And thus it should be our prayer and our endeavour to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and we are told not to look upon the wine when it is red; and we are bidden to refrain our foot from the path of sinners, and to refrain our tongue from evil and eschew it. The policy of the Christian is first to flee the temptation of alluring objects when he can, and then resist it to the uttermost when he cannot. He does the first when he sets no wicked thing before his eyes,* or rather avoids it, passes not by it, turns from it, and passes away.† He does the second, when in such circumstances as that he cannot withdraw, but may at least withstand—as when he sits to eat with a ruler, and considers diligently what is set before him; and puts a knife to his throat if he be a man given to appetite. The world we live in

* Ps. ci. 3.

† Prov. iv. 15.

is a world full of temptation to these distempered, or as the apostle terms them, these vile bodies; and it is only by a strenuous avoidance combined with a strenuous resistance, that we can maintain a holy separation from the objects which would otherwise lord it over us, and bring us under the dominion of those evil affections which war against the soul.

'Acceptable unto God.' There is a certain rigid and overstrained orthodoxy, which would banish this term altogether from the doings or the services of men; and has thus, we fear, done a world of mischief to practical religion. It is most true, as they contend, that the perfect obedience of Christ is the only ground of our meritorious acceptance with God—the only consideration on which the rewards of eternity can be challenged or claimed for us as rightfully our due. But this is no reason why acceptance, nay acceptance with God, should be so utterly dissociated as some would have it to be from the obedience of man. On this subject the Bible is far more free and fearless than are many of our sensitive theologians. It can tell us to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing;" and of the value which He has for our personal virtues, as for example, a "meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price;" and of the love He bears to the possessor of good moral qualities and habits, as when it says that "God loveth a cheerful giver;" and of the chief importance which it assigns to the services of our new obedience, making these the end or terminating object of our Saviour's death, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" and of the real substantive effect or virtue that there is in an endeavour for adding to our treasures in heaven, or to the rewards and joys of our eternity, as when it bids us be steadfast and immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain: And, in one word more, of its incessant demand for the right conduct of every disciple, and for the graces and accomplishments of a right character, as shining forth throughout all the Gospels, and in each of the Epistles. Now we cannot say of all or any part of this, that it is expressly denied by our evangelical Christians. Nay rather, it in words is expressly admitted by them; and it has a place in the formularies of every Protestant Church, and is harmonized by theologians into a consistency with the great doctrine of justification by faith—for they tell us, and tell us truly, that it forms no part of this justification, and that if our services or sacrifices be acceptable at all, they are only acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, in whom alone it is that we can find acceptance either for our persons or services. All this is very distinctly laid down; and yet with many a mind it does not countervail the effect of those denunciations which orthodoxy has launched forth on the presumption and vanity of human works. Such is the evil of fierce controversy, that, after all the attempts to correct or to qualify its previous fulminations on good works, there is still in many an anxious and agitated spirit, a general fear of them. So much has been said respecting the danger which there is of arrogating a merit because of our good works, that we almost feel as if there was a merit in renouncing them—could almost wish them undone, because of the hazard incurred in the doing of them. It is thus, we apprehend, that, as the compound result of all the arguments and asseverations which have been uttered in defence of the true system against the heresies of gainsayers on the subject of our acceptance with God—a freezing interdict has been laid by them on the activities of the Christian life. Surely it is a precious encouragement on the side of gospel obedience that God is highly pleased with it, though He will not admit it as forming our right to the inheritance of heaven—just as the father of a family on earth may be delighted with the services of his children and their efforts to do his will, though it be not these which constitute their right, their legal, forensic, and unchallengeable right to a place and a maintenance under the parent's roof. Let us dismiss then the chilling fears of a misplaced and mistaken orthodoxy on this subject; but enter with all alacrity on the path of duty, and in the full sense of a complacent smile from the upper sanctuary to cheer us on. In betaking ourselves to this walk, let us break through the fetters which an artificial theology may have laid upon it, and resolutely, yea hopefully, do the work of obedience, whether or not we can rightly assign the place which it holds in a regular and well-built system of divinity—trusting in the Lord and doing good — giving ourselves up to the practical and prescribed labour of Christianity; and this cheerfully, courageously, and with the comfort of knowing that our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.

'Which is your reasonable service.' Perhaps a reasonable, in contradistinction to a ritual service—the one applied to the living sacrifice of our own bodies, the other to the sacrifice of animals under the Jewish law. Not that it is not altogether reasonable to do a given thing, simply because it is the will of God: but there are certain things of which we see the reasonableness, prior to and apart from the voice of any express revelation; and others again in which there would have been no reasonableness, had it not been for the distinct and positive injunction of them by authority of the great Lawgiver. There would have been no reason, for example, in the prescribed form of the tabernacle, or in the prescribed offerings of the Hebrew ceremonial as laid down by Moses, had it not been for the things showed to him or the things told to him on the mount. There is an analogy between what we now say of the 'reasonable,' and what might be as well said of the 'right.' An observance may be right in itself, or only right and the matter of obligation because made the subject of a positive or statutory enactment on the part of God. It is truly a most right thing that we should do what He hath commanded, though solely on the ground of the commandment. But the thing thus commanded may, anterior to the commandment, have a primary and inherent rightness of its own. "Children," says the apostle, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right,"—not right only because God had commanded it, for this might be alleged of every precept which cometh out of His lips; but, separately from this consideration, having a proper and independent rightness of itself. And in like manner, as a service may in its own proper character be right, so may it in its own proper character be reasonable; and this applies pre-eminently to the service of the text—that is, the presentation of our bodies unto God as a living sacrifice. For not only is He Lord of the body, and its rich and bountiful Provider, and the upholder for every instant of its complex and curious workmanship by the word of His power; and what more reasonable than that the thing which so thoroughly and in all its parts subsists by Him, should in all things be subject to Him?—but let us think of the effect, if, instead of our bodies being made by us a sacrifice unto God, we should come under the degrading, the brutalizing influence of its vile affections, and so become slaves of the body, the wretched bondsmen of one or other or all its tyrant appetites—when the intervals of a worthless enjoyment should be filled up by the languor, the remorse, the disgust, and self-dissatisfaction, wherewith remaining conscience, so long as it keeps alive, exercises the unhappy victims of sordid indulgence and excess. Or should conscience die, and so the man sink into the animal, let us but think of the moral ruin which ensues when the master-faculty is put out, and all that is distinctive of a superior or spiritual nature is obliterated, where perhaps the dark imagery of terror, as the only badge and relic of an immortal capacity, might still continue at times to haunt and agonize him; and the Spirit of God takes His final departure from that foul and loathsome tenement, which, under another regimen, might have become a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; and the abject devotee of those pleasures which he can no longer resist though they now pall upon him, and present him with but the mockery of enjoyment, renounces for ever that service which he would have experienced to be perfect freedom had he only yielded up his members to be instruments of righteousness—and thus barters irrecoverably away from him the light and the liberty of God's own children. That truly is an unreasonable service by which Reason is disposted from her supremacy, and all the objects of a rational and immortal creature are given up in exchange for those short-lived pleasures of sin, which are but for a season.

Ver. 2.—'And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' 'And be not conformed to this world.' The sacrifice of our corporeal affections involves in it this bidden nonconformity. We should not then fashion ourselves according to our "former lusts" (1 Pet. i. 14). The grossness of paganism made the nonconformity between Christians and those who were without all the more palpable in those days. And accordingly when the disciples of Jesus Christ entered on their new course—resolving no longer to live the rest of their time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; and reckoning that the time past of their lives should suffice them to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when they walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries—then did the unconverted, the world as contradistinguished from the Church, and lying in wickedness, think it strange of these Christians that they ran not to the same excess of riot with themselves, and so spake evil of them.* The distinction may not be so glaring now-a-days, nor force itself so necessarily and irresistibly on the eye of the senses. But the enormities of the heathen world in those days, and of which we read in the descriptions both of the New Testament and of profane authors, were as little scandalous then as the gaieties and the amusements and those various companionships from which all sense of God and all the conversations of godliness are excluded, of the festive and fashionable and general society of our modern world can possibly be now. The distinction is the same, though its insignia be different. There is as wide a difference of spirit still between the children of light and the children of this world, whatever reforms or refinements of manner and external decency the latter may have undergone. The distinction is not the less real that it is perhaps more latent, and lurks now under the subtlety of a disguise which serves more to humanize all, and so seems more to assimilate all. And it requires now as deep and radical and searching an operation to effect the indispensable change, or translate the one character into the other, as it did in those days when the apostles, addressing those of his own disciples who at one time were fornicators, or idolaters, or adulterers, or effeminate, or abusers of themselves with mankind, or thieves, or covetous, or drunkards, or revilers, or extortioners, said—"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 9-11). This was the process of separation from the world then, and it is the process still—though it be a world now less revolting in its general aspect, and having on it a fairer face of civilisation and social morality. The same mighty agent is needed for the work of regeneration in all ages; and the same total revolution of spirit and character must be achieved on every son and daughter of Adam ere they can inherit the kingdom of God.

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* 1 Pet. iv. 2-4.

'But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' This single clause proves the magnitude of the transition. In order to our being not conformed, we must be transformed—and that not by a superficial amendment, but by a renewal, and more decisive still, a renewal in the very interior of our system—a change not merely on the outward walk, but a change in the central parts of our moral nature, or at the place of command and presiding authority, and where the main-spring of every deed and every movement lies. Some would have the body in the first verse, on the principle of the part for the whole, to signify the entire man. But this is unnecessary; and we should besides lose the impressiveness of a distinct reference to each of the two great departments in the human constitution, which we obtain when, passing on to the second verse, we find the subjection of the mind provided with an express and authoritative lesson, even as in the first verse is the subjection of the body to the will of God. It is thus that the whole of the living and willing and intelligent mechanism is not only mended, but is virtually, though not literally and in substance, made over again. The carnal mind is changed into the spiritual; and we are led to glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. vi. 20).

It is remarkable that this should be the subject of a precept, or that we should be as good as bidden to transform ourselves. It is not more remarkable, however, than that we should be told in Ezekiel (xviii. 31) to make us a new heart and a new spirit. The solution is found in this—that for every precept we may be said, under the economy of grace, to have a counterpart promise. And accordingly, by the mouth of the same prophet, God, in His own person, sends forth this gracious proclamation—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27). And what we have to do between this precept on the one hand, and this promise on the other, how we must turn ourselves for the purpose of making them good, is distinctly intimated in a following verse of this chapter—"I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them" (Ezek. xxxvi. 37). In other words, we have to seek and pray for the offered blessing. It is by the 'mercies of God' that Paul conjures us to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. To these mercies we should make our confident appeal; and as these form the subject of his invocation when he delivers to us the seemingly impracticable charge of renewing ourselves and transforming ourselves, so our faith in these forms our very instrument for the achievement of the task which he puts into our hands.

But this is not all. Even in the high and transcendental matter of our regeneration, we have a something to do as well as to pray for. Indeed the apostle, in the passage now in hand, tells us thus much, when in the preceding verse before he had bidden us be transformed by the renewing of our minds, he tells us how to dispose of our bodies—that is, keep their every appetite under restraint, even though it should be with such a violence to our inclinations as might amount to the feeling of a most painful sacrifice. And so also the prophet Ezekiel in the place already quoted, and before he had bidden his countrymen make them a new heart and a new spirit, lays it in charge upon them to cast away from them all the transgressions whereby they had transgressed.* But most significant of all is that saying of Hosea, when he complains of the people, that "they will not frame their doings to turn unto their God" (Hos. v. 4). Amid such explicit testimonies as these, the trumpet surely cannot be said to give an uncertain sound. We can neither pray too earnestly, nor work too diligently; and if it be asked, which of these should have the precedency,—better far than any metaphysical adjustment is the sound practical deliverance, that we can neither pray nor work too soon. On the one hand, we should "make haste and delay not to keep the commandments" (Ps. cxix. 60); but on the other, the cry of our felt helplessness can never ascend too early. The aspirations of the heart and movements of the hand should begin and keep pace together. Paul's first question at the moment of conversion was,—What wilt Thou have me to do? and his first recorded exercise is, Behold he prayeth! Let us dismiss, then, the idle question of the antecedency between these two things. Let there be no self-indulgence in praying, for thus should we be antinomians; no self-sufficiency in doing, for thus should we be legalists. It is not by sitting still in the attitude of a mystic and expectant quietism, that we shall carry our salvation. But neither is it by activities, however manifold or boundless, without a constant sense of dependence upon God. From the very outset His helping hand must be sought after. He not only puts His Spirit within us, but He causes us to walk in His statutes.†

'That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.' The man who lives in and is led by the Spirit of God will come to know, in the new and heaven-born desires of his own regenerated heart, what the will of God is. That fruit of the Spirit, which is in all righteousness and goodness and truth, must be best known in these its various characteristics and excellencies by him who is the bearer of it. When God putteth His law into the inward parts of men, and writes it in their hearts, then they need not to be taught of others, saying unto them, "Know the Lord;" for all who are thus enlightened know Him, "from the least even to the greatest" (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34). They surely know best the laws and lessons of the Holy Ghost who are the immediate subjects of His teaching; and even they who see their good works recognise in them the lineaments of that divine image in which they are created—and so, on looking to the righteousness and the true holiness of those whose light thus shines before men, discern in these virtues the very will and character of God, and are led thereby to glorify their Father who is in heaven.*

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* Ezek. xviii. 31.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

* Eph. iv. 24; Matt. v. 16.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

ROMANS XII. 3-8.

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

VER. 3.—'For I say, through the grace given unto me.' The particle 'for' establishes a connexion between the present and the preceding verse, and which I think might be made out in this way—Paul had just as good as said, that by being transformed through the renewal of our minds, we should be enabled to prove or discriminate or ascertain what is the will of God. We should be "renewed in knowledge" (Col. iii. 10). We should not only be made right in our wills, but right in our understandings also. Indeed the one rightness is a sort of guarantee for the other—He that willeth to do God's will shall know the doctrine of Christ;* of Him who pre-eminently and indeed exclusively is the Teacher of the things of God, seeing that "no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). It is thus that he who wills aright shall be made to know aright, and more especially to know the character and will of God. Now this rectification of the will, and consequently of the understanding, is achieved by a renewal of the mind, which itself is an operation of divine grace; and so there is a peculiar significancy and connexion in Paul telling the Christians of Rome, when proceeding to unfold the will of God for the regulation of their conduct, that what he was going to say was through the grace given unto him. He had just acquitted himself throughout the foregoing chapters of this epistle as a teacher of truth;

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* John vii. 17.

and he now tells them how he came by his qualifications for discharging the office on which he was about to enter, of a teacher of righteousness. He was on the eve of giving forth so many practical lessons—a list of particulars respecting the will of God—which he through grace was enabled as their apostle to reveal; and which they, if indeed his genuine disciples, would also through grace be enabled to recognise, as those very lessons of righteousness which proceeded from God, and had in them the character and seal of the upper sanctuary. Between him and them, there would be the tact and sympathy of a common understanding. They would hear his voice. If gifted with spiritual discernment,[*] their eye would see and acknowledge the rightness of what their teacher set before them.[†] They would not be unwise, but "understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. v. 17). In knowledge and in all judgment would they "approve [‡] the things that are excellent" (Phil. i. 10); and so, "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. i. 9), would both teacher and taught give proof of their common discernment of the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

'To every man that is among you.' He comprehends all in the advice which he offers; but with the special design, we have no doubt, of reading the lesson which they stood most in need of, to those in the Church, who, like Diotrephes, loved to have the pre-eminence—whether they were boastful Jews [§] who still retained somewhat of their old leaven, or arrogant Gentiles who boasted against the branches.[||] It was precisely the lesson, which if it but included them all, was the most fitted of all others to hush and to harmonize the discordant elements of the society which he was addressing.

'Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.' This may be regarded either as a general dissuasive against pride, and we shall not go astray though in part we so understand it; or it may be viewed as having a special reference to the temper and conduct of the various ecclesiastical functionaries—each signalized by his own distinct gift, and holding his own distinct office in the Church. The following context clearly proves that this latter object too was in the mind of the apostle, which in no way precludes our looking to it in the former light also, as a morality of universal application. We cannot but think, however, that in the direction here given the case of the Church's office-bearers, if not chiefly, was at least fully in his eye. He wished them in particular not to think highly of themselves, lest they should aspire to such offices as they were not fit for. What he desired was, that each should be satisfied with his own special gift and his own calling—just as he received it from that Spirit "who divideth to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 11). He would have each to keep by the part assigned to him, without taking upon him, and still more without despising or undervaluing the part which belonged to another. The next clause presents a consideration eminently applicable to this understanding of the matter. 'According as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.' The very consideration that it is God who determines for every man his place, should not only make the man satisfied to keep within it; but, if a place of honour, it should lead him to bear meekly and modestly the distinction thus conferred upon him by a higher hand. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" And then it is given in measure only—as if in contradistinction to Him who was the great pattern of humility, and to whom it was given without measure. The expression—every man's *measure* of faith—implies that the faith of each was limited; which it might be, either in degree, as the general faith which makes one a Christian is stronger or weaker with different individuals; or in kind, as some special faith, the exercise of which was followed up by a forthputting of some one or other of the special gifts or endowments of that period. Thus there was the faith of miracles, which enabled one man to work them;* and a faith having respect to a different object, which empowered another to prophesy, or a third to speak tongues, or a fourth to interpret them, or a fifth who was qualified by his peculiar faith for his peculiar office, which might have been the discernment of spirits, or some one or other of those numerous diversities which in that age of preternatural manifestations made part of the full complement of a Christian Church. Each man had his own sort of faith, and appropriate thereto his own sort of function. Believest thou that I, the Lord of these various administrations, am able to do for you *this?*† And according to these their several faiths, was it severally done unto them. It might well have humbled them to consider, that not only were the gifts of one and all received by them, but the preceding and preparatory faiths proper to each gift were respectively dealt out to them. God dealt out to every man his measure of faith; or understanding it in its more special and restricted sense, God gave to each of these privileged men that particular faith which led or opened the way to him for his particular acquirement. And the very same consideration ought powerfully to tell in the humbling of all spiritual pride—for it holds true of the general faith, the faith by which we are saved, that, not only is the salvation a gift (by grace are ye saved), but the very faith is not of ourselves, it being "the gift of God" (Eph. ii. 8). And indeed, in the exercise of faith, from the very nature of it, all is fitted not to exalt but to humble—for the greater our faith, the greater is our self-renunciation; and the more singly, as well as more strongly, do we draw and depend on One who is higher than ourselves. It is thus that the loftiest in faith is necessarily the lowliest in self-distrust or self-abasement. It is altogether an act of self-emptying, the very opposite of arrogance or self-elation; and is clearly so viewed by the apostle, when he checks the boastful disposition of his converts, by the consideration—Thou standest by faith, and therefore "be not high-minded, but fear" (Rom. xi. 20).

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[*] 1 John iv. 1.

[†] Isa. xxx. 20.

[‡] Δοκιμαζειν.—The same is the original word for "prove" in Rom. xii. 2.

[§] Rom. ii. 17, 23.

[||] Rom. xi. 18.

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* Luke xvii. 6.

† Matt. ix. 28, 29.

Ver. 4, 5.—'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.' Now follows the context which determines the more special of the two meanings assigned to the preceding verse—as bearing, though not an exclusive, at least a very distinct reference to the office-bearers of a Church—namely, that each keep within his own particular sphere; and no one thrust himself into the duties, or usurp the office of another. As in other scriptures,* he here avails himself of the human body as a figure, by the various members of which he would illustrate the mutual helpfulness of the Church's several functionaries to each other, as well as the indispensableness of each to the wellbeing and perfection of the whole—they being one body in Christ the Head, and in virtue of their common relation to this one body, being every one members one of another. The same is expressed otherwise in 1 Cor. xii. 27; and signifies the mutual subserviency and use of the parts to each other, as well as their harmonious adjustment into one system. And upon this analogy does he ground his lesson of the confusion and disorder that would ensue, did each encroach on the proper business of the other—as if the foot were to attempt the work of the hand, or any one member were to undertake the functions of any of the rest. And his twofold direction is, that each should abide by his own duties, while he maintains the utmost deference for the place and performance of the others—being at once helpful to all and doing honour to all. It is thus that they would best demonstrate their being in Christ—and that not by an ostensible or merely economical, but by a vital and personal and real union. We can never overrate the vast importance for Christianity of such a unity as this among a Church's members and office-bearers. This is powerfully manifested in our Saviour's prayer —that all His disciples might be one, even "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*" (John xvii. 21). It is further worthy of observation, that to save the heats and the heart-burnings incidental to the complex and economical structure of a Christian society, the description of its mechanism is similarly followed up by the apostle in his Epistles to the Corinthians and the Romans—there by a glorious persuasive to charity, and here by a series of verses, which together make up the brightest tablet of the social moralities ever presented to the world. In his representation too of the same thing to the Ephesians, it is the grand lesson of love which forms the main end and burden of his argument.

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* 1 Cor. xii. 12; Eph. iv. 15; v. 30.

But before proceeding to the enforcement of this lesson, either in its general form, or in its various applications, as set forth in the last half of the chapter on hand—let us first follow the apostle in his enumeration of the divers acts or offices which in his days appertained to a Christian Church, and must of course have been of beneficial operation in subserving the designs of this great moral institute. But before entering on the exposition of the verses where these are specified, we would remark on the great number of distinct services which were laid each on a distinct set of office-bearers in apostolic times, coupled with this maxim of Church-government which seems generally to have obtained at that period—even that each distinct functionary should keep by his own distinct functions, as if these were enough for all his energies. This subdivision of employment, and that too in the proper work of a Christian Church, was greatly proceeded on, and that too in the best and most prosperous and most efficient period of its history, when it had just come fresh from heaven upon the world, and drew direct, or at first hand, from the fountains of inspiration. But the principle which was so much respected then, we grieve to say it, is signally traversed in the present day. One might well have imagined, that in that season of extraordinary and preternatural endowments, the Spirit of God could have overborne the varieties of nature, and, without respect to the separate talents and dispositions of each mental constitution, could have fitted one man for the discharge of many offices. But this is not His method; and, instead of overbearing, He imitates the variety of nature—dividing to every man severally as He will: And so we behold in the spectacle of a primitive Church, the economy of a complex and variegated service made up of many offices—not accumulated on one man, but parted with a right and proper adaptation among many office-bearers, where each laboured in the task he was fitted for, and meddled not with the employments or the services of other men. Surely now, and in this far less gifted age, it is all the more necessary to consult the special ability of each for the special work in which, whether by nature or grace, he is most qualified to excel. We should suit the objective to the subjective—a great lesson, and as well in the business of the Church as in the business of general society. In this matter a wise Christian policy, or sound policy of the Church, is at one with the policy of the world. We should, as much as possible, humour, even as the Spirit Himself does, the constitutional varieties of taste and talent among men—a maxim this, which has been signally traversed in our present day—when ministers are made men of all works; and each, more especially if he have earned an eminence for something, has many things laid upon him; and so is drawn away from his own favourite walk, which generally speaking, if permitted to keep by it without molestation, would to him be by far the most productive walk of Christian usefulness. What makes it all the more ruinous is, that rarely indeed is one man eminent in more than one thing; and the sure way therefore of degrading him from eminence to mediocrity, is to bustle and belabour him with more than one object. In the time of the apostles, the work of the Christian ministry was broken down into manifold departments; and we then beheld the goodly spectacle of a well-going Church, having its business conducted and carried forward by means of a well-stocked agency. The tendency now is in an opposite direction

—to abridge and economize, and thus mutilate and impair to the uttermost the original machinery of a Christian Church. And so not only have many of its primitive offices been lost sight of and fallen into desuetude, but the few remaining office-holders, on whom the whole burden is devolved, instead of operating each with intense efficiency and power of observation on his own separate employment, is forced to generalize, and do all slightly, or to neglect and leave much undone. And no wonder, therefore, at the complaints of our having lighted on a day of small things, and among the pigmies of a slender and superficial generation.

Ver. 6-8.—'Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' Whether ours be the gifts of Providence, or of what is properly termed grace—that is, whether they have been conferred on us by nature, or more specially through the channel of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ, the very same lesson is applicable to both. It is alike our duty to consecrate them to the service of God and the good of mankind. They alike proceed from Him—for what hast thou, O man, that thou didst not receive? And far better, both in the Church and in society, that each should be provided with his own sphere of labour; and that it should be the kind of labour for which, by his specific endowments, be they of genius or habit or grace, he is best adapted. But let us look to the matter ecclesiastically, and with a strict reference to the promotion of Christianity in our respective neighbourhoods; and we shall come nearer to the main object of the apostle, who recognises the difference between the gifts of one man and another, as due to the grace that was respectively given to each of them This does not necessarily limit our view to the varieties of official service, though these be included in it, and indeed form the cases of chief consideration. Still the lesson of these verses is a lesson for the members of a Church as well as for office-bearers—it being alike the duty of all to lay themselves out for the cause of religion, and that according either to the opportunities which are without, or to the talents and capacities which they feel to be within them. But let us attend to what these services particularly are, as specified and enumerated in the verses before us.

'Whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.' In the following induction of the gifts 'differing according to the grace' given, we may remark, that there are none of those extraordinary powers which the apostle specifies in the wider enumeration of his Epistle to the Corinthians, where he tells of the "diversities of gifts," which are by the same Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 4). There is not one of the functions spoken of here which might not to a certain extent be discharged by Christians in an individual or private, as well as in an official capacity. So that while we have no doubt the apostle had chiefly in his eye the officials of the congregation, the lessons which he gives are of catholic application, and might be appropriated by all. To prophesy was without question the professional employment of a distinct class of office-bearers in those days—"And he gave some, prophets" (Eph. iv. 11). It is well known, however, that prophesying in Scripture is not restricted to the foretelling of what is future. In this passage there is no cognisance taken of any miraculous office. The prophesying here spoken of is tantamount to ordinary preaching. In the Scriptural sense of the term, any man of God is a prophet, whether he be endued with the preternatural knowledge of coming events or not—simply if he be an instructor in the things of God; and that whether the instruction in which he deals be instruction in doctrine or instruction in righteousness, or is comprehensive of both. Here we think it used in its generic sense; and that these its two species are afterwards particularized under the heads of teaching and exhortation. And these prophets are called on to exercise their vocation according to the proportion of faith. We cannot think that by this is meant what theologians term the analogy of faith. This clause we hold to be of the same force and import with the final clause of the third verse—'according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith'—that measure, in fact, which regulates both the kind of gift and the degree of its exercise. The same qualifications then may be applied, not to the office of prophecy alone, but to each of the offices that are mentioned afterwards. And if instead of offices we regard them as duties, certain it is, as we said before, that they are competent to the members of a church as well as to its office-bearers. That private Christian acts as a prophet, in whom "the word of Christ dwells richly in all wisdom"*—when out of the abundance of a heart thus charged, his mouth speaketh (Mat. xii. 34). He believes, therefore he speaks;* or, agreeably to the expression before us, his utterance is in proportion to his faith. It is not for clergy alone surely to monopolize this branch of Christian usefulness—a usefulness not confined to the pulpit, but which might spread and be multiplied amongst the social parties of every neighbourhood, when they that fear the Lord "speak often one to another" (Mal. iii. 16). It is not for ministers alone, but the duty of every man, so to season his speech as that it should be "alway with grace" (Col. iv. 6). It is surely not to ministers alone that the apostle says —"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. iv. 29). As little then does that which immediately follows apply exclusively to ministers, but is intended for all—Let what proceedeth out of your mouth be good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

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* Col. iii. 16.

'Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering.' 'Ministry' (διακονια) we hold also to be a generic term, like prophecy in the verse which goes before; and comprehensive of the two things which come afterwards under the heads of giving and showing mercy. The great lesson, however, 'Let each mind his own business,' is still kept up and carried out to all the departments of official, and in all the instances, we might add, of general service. The lesson primarily and specially directed to Church officers is applicable to every man. "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet. iv. 10). Looking again ecclesiastically and not generally to the matter, the ministry in this verse may be distinguished from prophecy in the one before—as that which properly appertaineth to "the outward business of the house of God" (Neh. xi. 16).

'Or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation.' The apostle now returns to the prophetical office, and specifies two distinct branches of it. The faculties of teaching and exhorting may be combined in the same individual; and indeed in these days they are best laid upon one person, the ordinary minister of a congregation. Yet the two faculties are so far separate, as in other times to have given rise to separate functions; and accordingly, in the machinery of more Churches than one, have we read both of the doctor and the pastor as distinct office-bearers. The one expounds truth; the other applies it, and presses it home on the case and conscience of every individual. The didactic and the hortatory are two distinct things, and imply distinct powers—insomuch that, on the one hand, a luminous, logical, and masterly didactic may be a feeble and unimpressive hortatory preacher; and, on the other, the most effective of our hortatory men may, when they attempt the didactic, prove very obscure and infelicitous expounders of the truth. Both are best; and we should conform more to the way of that Spirit who divideth His gifts severally as He will, did we multiply and divide our offices so as to meet this variety. It were more consonant both to philosophy and Scripture, did we proceed more on the subdivision of employment in things ecclesiastical.

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* Psalm cxvi. 10.

'He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity.' If the duty here specified be regarded as a function in the hand of a functionary, it is that of a deacon, or distributor of the Church's alms. The word in the original for 'simplicity' has been variously interpreted, and made to stand for a great many different virtues. Its proper signification is singleness; and wherever its place or connexion determines its meaning to some one of these virtues, it will mean that virtue in a state of purity, and as free from the alloy of any corruption, or the influence of any principle adverse to or different from itself. Thus in 2 Cor. viii. 2, there can be no doubt of its meaning a strong and single-hearted liberality; in 2 Cor. i. 12, a single-hearted conscientiousness—and that too in the midst of distracting forces; in Eph. vi. 5, a simple devotedness to the will of Christ; the same in Col. iii. 22; in 2 Cor. xi. 3, an entire and undivided credence in the doctrine of Christ; and in the passage before us, a singleness of aim on the part of our deacon to do aright the duty of his calling—a oneness of purpose to fulfil the end of his appointment, which was not the satisfaction of the poor for the sake of his own popularity, but so to deal with them in the office of a distributor, as might best subserve the good of the poor, or be most conducive to their real and substantial wellbeing. Such simplicity as this might lead him to a large distribution of money or not, according to circumstances. Its aim is not the greatest possible amount of liberality, but the greatest possible benefit to those who are the objects of its care. That Christians in general have a part in this rule is quite obvious. They are called to be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate, and to consider the poor, and to open the bowels of their compassion towards them. What the office-bearers are required to do for the paupers of the Church, all are required to do as they have the opportunity and the call, for the poor of society at large.

'He that ruleth, with diligence.' There seems to be interposed here a function not exclusively confined to the business either of prophecy or deaconship, but which may extend to all other ecclesiastical business, and has been specially applied to the discipline of the Church. It is true that of the ruling elders some there were who laboured in word and doctrine; but in modern practice they who owned this title have had chiefly to do with matters of discipline. And were but the territory of a parish, with its population, rightly parcelled out amongst them —did they but take cognisance of the moral and religious habits of their respective families—would they but prosecute their weekly or periodic rounds of visitation, and do their uttermost in stimulating the education and the economy and the temperance and the church-going and the family worship of all the households within their charge—in this high work of philanthropy, there is ample scope for as much diligence as they can afford to expend upon it; but along with this, by the Divine blessing on their labours, the amplest encouragement, in that most delightful of all employments, the prosperous management of human nature—to be followed up in God's good time by that most delightful of all rewards, the elevated morals and piety of those neighbourhoods over which they expatiate. Here too it is evident that the Christian usefulness which might be achieved by the elder of a Church, lies within the reach of all in a greater or less degree; and that it is the duty of all thus to lay themselves out for the furtherance of religion in the world.

'He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.' There was an official channel provided also for this species or modification of benevolence in the ancient Christian churches. It formed a distinct office from that of deacon or almoner, whose business it was to act as a dispenser among the poor of the charities of the faithful. Besides these, there were those whose part it was to officiate among the distressed from other causes than that of mere poverty, as the afflicted in any other way, and especially the diseased. They were distinct too from those "elders of the Church" of whom we read in James, and who were sent for by the sick to pray over them, or in the discharge of a spiritual duty. The visitors of whom we now treat had the charge rather of a temporal ministration—attending the sick at their own houses, to whom they gave the comfort of their presence, and the help of their personal services. For the better execution of this trust, there was appointed an order of deaconesses, who officiated then very much as do the Sisters of Charity in later times. It was quite an appropriate lesson for them that what they did they should do 'with cheerfulness'—or with perfect good-will and a congenial liking for the task, that, from their very smiles and looks of kindness, the objects of their care might derive a happiness in sympathy with their own. This too is obviously a lesson for all, and is as applicable on the walk of general philanthropy as within the economy of a Church. Whoever has leisure for such services of humanity would do well to study this advice of the apostle—though primarily designed by him for the office-bearers of an ecclesiastical community. The goodly equipment of offices in the ancient Church for all sorts and varieties of well-doing, carries with it a severe reproach on the meagre, stinted, and parsimonious apparatus of modern times.

LECTURE XC.

ROMANS XII. 9-13, 15, 16.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.... Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

THOUGH the apostle may be regarded in the few last verses as addressing himself in a more especial manner to the few office-holders of a select society—yet certain it is, that the instructions which he gives them are based on the soundest principles of a general ethics, that had a permanent and universal application; and wherewith he now breaks forth on a field as general as are the principles themselves which he had just been urging and enforcing on the occupiers of a narrower sphere. No one can question that in what follows, they are not rules limited to a few cases or situations, but the wide and catholic moralities of the species in which he deals, of the same extent and compass with humanity itself, or in every way as general as Christianity herself is general. We may therefore omit henceforth the consideration of the Church's office-bearers, and feel that they are now those duties of unexcepted obligation which men owe to their God and to each other wherewith from this time we have properly to do.

Ver. 9.—'Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.' 'Let love be without dissimulation;' or, as we have it in other scriptures—let ours be "love unfeigned" (2 Cor. vi. 6; 1 Pet. i. 22). The spirit of this direction is the same with that which the apostle, a few verses before, had laid upon the deacons—"Let him who giveth do it with simplicity." There is the frequent semblance both of faith and love without the reality of either; and so he speaks too of "unfeigned faith" (1 Tim. i. 5; 2 Tim. i. 5). He elsewhere speaks of the "sincerity of our love" (2 Cor. viii. 8). The charge here given is tantamount to that of the apostle John —"Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John iii. 18).

'Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good.' I think with Calvin, that it is not moral good in the general, or moral evil in the general, which is here intended; but that good which springs immediately from love to one's neighbour, and that evil which springs as immediately from the opposite affections of hatred, malice, or revenge. It is the same good and evil as that spoken of in the last verse of this chapter, where the apostle tells his disciples to overcome evil with good—that is, to meet the persecution and injustice of enemies, not with the maledictions of anger or returns of vengeance, but with blessing and kindness and peace. The good which he bids them cleave to in the one verse, is that which he also tells them not to quit their hold of in another, but to keep by and wield as the instrument of a great moral victory; and the evil which in the first of these two places he bids them abhor having any part or performance in themselves, is the very evil which he tells them not to retaliate should it ever be inflicted on them by others.

Ver. 10.—'Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.' The words in the original convey more strongly and specifically the 'affection' of our text than has been adequately rendered in our translation. The being kindly affectioned is expressed by a term which means "the love of kindred," or by some called "instinctive;" and which, at all events, is far more intense than the general good liking that obtains without the pale of relationship between man and man in society. It is an affection distinct from, and in general greatly more tenacious and tender than that of ordinary friendship. And, to stamp upon it a still greater peculiarity and force, it is added that Christians should be kindly affectioned one to another with *brotherly love*—an affection, the distinctness of which from that of charity is clearly brought out in the enumeration of virtues or graces made by the apostle Peter:* "And to brotherly-kindness add charity"—the same with brotherly love in the original; and as distinct from general love or charity in the moral as the magnetic attraction is from the general attraction of gravity in the material world. This more special affinity which binds together the members of the same family, and even of wider communities—as when it establishes a sort of felt brotherhood, an *esprit de corps*, between citizens of the same town, or inhabitants of the same country, or members of the same profession, and so originates the several ties of consanguinity or neighbourhood or patriotism—is nowhere exemplified in greater force than among the disciples of a common Christianity, if theirs be indeed the genuine faith of the gospel. It is in fact one of the tests or badges of a real discipleship. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John iii. 14). It gives rise to that more special benevolence which we owe to the "household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10), as distinguished from the common beneficence which we owe "unto all men," and which stood forth so visibly in the first ages among the fellow-worshippers of Jesus, as to have made it common with observers to say—Behold how these Christians love one another!

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* 2 Pet. i. 7.

'In honour preferring one another'—each leading the way in acts of respect and courtesy—the contest being which shall render the other the greatest deference and honour. "Let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. ii. 3). This would remove one of the greatest obstacles in the way of mutual affection—the great lesson of our passage, as it is the great lesson of the evangelic morality throughout the New Testament. Self-preference and jealousy of each other's reputation, have in all ages of the Christian Church been the greatest provocatives to that envying and strife which are opposed to the meekness of the wisdom that is from above. Hence in a very great degree the unseemly contentions of ecclesiastical men, which have ever proved the worst hindrances to the adoption of measures for the good of Christianity. This love of power and of pre-eminence has in all ages been adverse to the objects of a sound and disinterested ecclesiastical patriotism. It might be traced even to apostolical times. Paul seems to have been sensible of its presence among the chief men of the council at Jerusalem, and to have felt the necessity of protecting himself against it; and so before he would submit his question to a public assembly, he took care by a round of previous attentions to propitiate those of them who were of reputation, by communicating with them privately, lest by any means he should run or had run in vain. He with a most justifiable wisdom went first to those "who seemed to be somewhat" (Gal. ii. 6)—it might have been perhaps for the purpose of obtaining counsel and information; but the further purpose seems to be insinuated of gaining them over by the homage beforehand of his recognition and respect. And even should we discern in this policy of our great apostle the offering of a little incense to the personal vanity of those on whom he waited, we see nothing in this but the marvellous identity of human nature at all times and in all places of the world; or that the leaders and men of consequence then should be of the same affections with the men of consequence now—the ecclesiastical somewhats of the present day.

Ver. 11.—'Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.' The word here translated 'business,' is the same with that which in the eighth verse is translated "diligence." Its proper and primitive signification is 'speed,' and hence the affection which prompts to speed—or earnestness, intenseness, the desirousness of a heart set on some particular object, and therefore setting one busily to work for its accomplishment; and thus the fervency of spirit in the next clause may be looked to as the animating principle of that diligence in business which is here inculcated—even as in the case of Apollos,* who, "being fervent in the spirit," did in consequence speak and teach diligently the things of the Lord. But whether we retain the word business, or render it into any other of the relative terms, there is no mistaking the sense of this first clause, which is not to be slothful, but diligent, and that whatever the business may be, if an expedient and a lawful one. The question whether it be a sacred or secular employment which is here referred to, will not embarrass him whose honest aim it is to leaven with the spirit of the gospel every hour of his life, and every work to which he puts his hand. The man who studies to observe "all things whatsoever" Christ hath commanded him,† will still feel himself religiously employed when following the precept—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccl. ix. 10). He will see no difficulty in making the advice here given to be of universal application, who aspires to a conformity with the sayings—"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God:" "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Neither in the absence of any express utterance from Scripture itself will he be careful to determine whether it be the Spirit of God or the spirit of man that is spoken of in the next clause—if sufficiently indoctrinated by Scripture at large in the truth, that all right fervency in the spirit of man is from the Spirit of God alone—is the product of fire from the sanctuary, and not of his own kindling.* It is thus that in practical Christianity there is a conjunction of prayer with performance; and the disciple striveth mightily, according to the grace that worketh in him mightily.

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* Acts xviii. 25.

† Matt. xxviii. 20.

'Serving the Lord.' There is a different reading adopted now by the most learned of our Biblists, and that because of the number and authority of those manuscripts which present the Greek word for "time." We should then understand the direction to be—'Do diligently each work in its own season'—or, 'Let each hour be busily filled up with its own proper employment.' We should have given our assent to this emendation, but for the word 'serve,' which in the Greek implies subjection, and in the most entire and submissive form; and in which sense it stands in far more suitable relation to a living superior, and most of all to Him who liveth and is Supreme. It were apposite enough to speak of suiting the time, but not of submitting to the time—whereas nothing can be more appropriate than that in all things we should submit ourselves unto the Lord.

Ver. 12.—'Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.' There are some commentators who endeavour to run a thread of continuity throughout the various precepts of this chapter; and so to force a dependence of one upon another contiguous to it, as would perhaps somewhat pervert the obvious meaning of certain of these rules. Instead of supposing that each rule suggested its fellow, and that they all follow each other like the terms of a series, on the principle of the association of ideas—it seems to us the better theory, that they are also in part suggested to the mind of the apostle by his direct view of the exigencies of that society which he was addressing; and that therefore we behold in these precepts as much and as little of the miscellaneous as there was of the miscellaneous at the time in the chief temptations and circumstances of the Romish Christians. Now in the first instance they were exposed to jealousies and contentions from within, to meet which we have one class of charges—mutual respect and mutual cordiality; and more especially the duties of office-bearers, whose part it was to refrain from all lordly contempt or usurpation of the work of other functionaries, and each to keep rightly and assiduously at the appropriate business of his own calling. And then, in the second instance, they were exposed to persecution from without; and hence another and a distinct set of charges—hope, and patience, and prayer, and sympathy for the afflicted among their brethren, and succour to those of them who were spoiled of their goods; and, most of all, meekness and forbearance and unquelled charity under all the provocation and injustice that were heaped upon them.

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* Isaiah L. 11.

'Rejoicing in hope'—and that even in the midst of tribulations.* This must have been the hope of glory in another life—the only hope which could rejoice the hearts of those of whom Paul says, that if in this life only they had hope, they were of all men the "most miserable" (1 Cor. xv. 19). Theirs was a hope which reached beyond the grave—the hope of those who walked by faith and not by sight, or who looked beyond the things which are seen and temporal to those which are unseen and eternal. It was this which made all their afflictions light unto them — the contemplation of that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory which was to follow their present trials, and for the full enjoyment of which these trials were fitted to prepare them.†

'Patient in tribulation.' The very same hope which ministers joy in the bright prospects of the future, ministers patience under the sufferings of the present. Even Jesus Christ, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross" (Heb. xii. 2).

'Continuing instant in prayer.' For though hope will elevate and sustain in the midst of adversities; yet the hope of unseen realities on the other side of death requires to be itself sustained by a power that is above nature—else nature gives way. We are made to "abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 13). It is thus that the faith and fortitude of the Christian are alimented by constant supplies of light and grace from above, and which supplies are kept up by instant prayer. For this purpose we must pray and watch for the Spirit "with all perseverance" (Eph. vi. 18). Prayer is not confined to the occasions of its set and formal utterance. It may alternate in brief and frequent aspirations with the familiar business of life; nay, it may exist as a prayerful disposition in the heart, or in the form of perennial tendency upward and heavenward; and he who owns such a disposition, whether he have the power and opportunity of sending forth articulate supplications or not, may be said to pray without ceasing.

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* Rom. v. 2, 3; James i. 2.

† 2 Cor. iv. 18; v. 7.

Ver. 13.—'Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.' The view of the Church at Rome as a suffering and persecuted Church might well have suggested these rules also—not merely that they are of permanent and universal obligation, but that there was a more pressing and peculiar call for them in those days of violence—when the very profession of Christianity exposed those who held it to the loss of their substance, or to be dismissed from the service of their employers. And the word is expressive of something more than a simple giving. It means to give with a fellow-feeling, and as if the case of the sufferer was one's own. It is our duty to give unto all, if it be for their good, as we have opportunity. But here the apostle speaks of giving for the necessities of the saints—of giving therefore with that special sympathy which he enjoins in another form, when he bids his disciples rejoice with them who rejoice, and weep with them who weep. The common danger of those times disposed men all the more readily so to give, as if they had all things common.

'Given to hospitality.' And this too is far from being a local or merely occasional virtue—though doubtless there was a more urgent occasion for its exercise in those days. The proper sense of hospitality is kindness to strangers, or to those who were at a distance from their own home—a wholly different thing from the conviviality which opens one's house to festive parties made up of acquaintances from the immediate neighbourhood. This was the common lot of Christians in those days—often scattered abroad by persecution,* and dependent both for food and shelter on the compassion of their brethren in the faith. Let it not be imagined however, that this is a duty confined to any one period, or called forth by the extraordinary circumstances of the Church during the first ages—a common expedient this for diluting the peculiar morality of the gospel, or blunting the force and application of its most authoritative precepts. There is here an obligation laid on Christians of all times, as indelible as the record which contains it—distinct, however, from that expenditure on the enjoyments of the social board, which now forms almost all that is known under the name of hospitality—as distinct as the feasts enjoined by our Saviour to the poor and the helpless are from the merry companionships that alternate or pass in rounds from house to house among the children of fashion and luxury. Not that we would utterly proscribe these reciprocal convivialities of the middle or higher classes—burdensome though they often are, and wearisome to an extreme from the entire destitution, whether of the intellectual or the spiritual, in the conversation of our every-day parties. Our religionists might in a great degree be protected from this latter annoyance, were they but consistent with themselves; and did they aim at an entire, instead of a partial Christianity. Had they more of openness and intrepidity in their talk—when they sit at the same table, did they meet together on the footing of a society of immortals—would they speak of the country whither they were going, and of the character which prepared for it—a goodly number even of their present society might be amalgamated into a conformity with their own spirit, while the rest might be scared away from those resorts, in the atmosphere of which they could not breathe with congeniality or comfort. There would thus be brought about a thing mainly wanted in our day—a broader line of demarcation between the Church and the world. It may seem a paradox, but it is not the less true, that it is easier to be an altogether than an almost Christian.

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* Acts viii. 1, 4; xi. 19; James i. 1.

Ver. 15, 16.—'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.' Passing over at present a verse which regards the deportment of the persecuted Christians to their enemies, we, in the next two verses, still find the apostle occupied with the matters of that internal morality which should subsist among themselves, or with the directory of their conduct to each other.

'Rejoice with them that do rejoice.' He, a few verses before, had bidden them rejoice in hope; and certainly it is well that Christians, for their mutual encouragement, and to uphold the steadfastness of their faith, should speak often together of that heaven which is the home of their common expectations. But beside this, the sympathy of congratulation seems to be recommended in this clause, even as the sympathy of pity forms the subject of the next. A sincere happiness in the happiness of others, argues not merely the strength of our affections, but our freedom from envy towards them.

'And weep with them that weep.' There is a charm in the fellow-feeling of others, distinct altogether from the pleasure we have in any material benefit that we may receive from them. This last is provided for in a foregoing verse, under the heads of 'distributing to the necessity of saints, and being given to hospitality.' But to complete either the code of charity, or the happiness of that society over which it reigns, it is indispensable that the moral should be superadded to the substantial or physical; for certainly apart either from gifts or services, there is enjoyment, and that of the highest order, both in the mere exercise of kind and brotherly affection on the one hand, and in being merely the object of such affection on the other—whether it be that of sympathy with the prosperous, which heightens the felicities, or of sympathy with the afflicted, which alleviates the ills of humanity. It is thus that independently of all aid from the hands, there comes a direct and most precious contribution to the happiness of the species from the hearts of men—and that by instant transition, in the play of their reciprocal emotions from one spirit to another. The apostle was no stranger to the balsamic virtue, as of some hidden essence or elixir, which lay in this more ethereal part of well-doing. In those days it operated with all the speed and force of a pulsation, throughout the widely extended community of the faithful: "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. xii. 26).

The three clauses of the sixteenth verse serve, we think, to qualify and determine the meaning of each. The general lesson of the fifteenth is, that all, and more especially if saints or members of the same Christian society, should, if in like circumstances, be alike sharers of our sympathy. And we are inclined to view the general lesson of the sixteenth as being that these same parties, as all members of the Christian Church, should at least in far the highest and noblest distinction of which humanity is capable, have the like place or be alike sharers in our estimation. We do not regard them as meaning that we should all think the same things—that we should be of one orthodoxy, or of one opinion in matters of doctrine or theology; but that whatever the diversities of our rank or station may be, we should, on the ground of our common Christianity, hold each other in equal or like estimation. The original presents a counterpart between the 'each other' of the first clause and the 'yourselves' of the third, which, coupled in each with the same radical word, impresses the idea that, when taken together, they signify that we should mutually hold each other in the same estimation, and not confine our estimation to ourselves.* If in

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* Τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες, and Μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς.

Phil. ii. 3 we are told that in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than themselves—in this place, and to our minds it gives the precise sense of the passage, we are told that each should esteem other at least as good as themselves. And in keeping with this view, we are disposed to think that in the middle clause they are not men of low estate to whom we are bidden condescend, but low or humble things that we are bidden be content with. Do not aspire after high things, but consent to be evened with low things. Honour all your fellow-Christians, and that alike on the ground of their common and exalted prospects. When on this high level, do not plume yourselves on the insignificant distinctions of your superior wealth or superior earthly consideration of whatever sort. Rather let the rich rejoice in that he is made low; and thus let the monopoly of honour or self-respect give way to the respect of each other. We do not lose the benefit of the precept in our version—'condescend to men of low estate'—by our substitution of *things* for *men*. He who for the sake of the gospel can put up with low things, with poverty and all its humble accommodations, will not refuse to associate with Christian men who are lovers and followers of the gospel, because of their poverty.

LECTURE XCI.

ROMANS XII. 14, 17-21.

"Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not....Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

THE apostle does not satisfy himself with pressing home upon his converts the duties which they owe to each other; but in the verses now read teaches them further how they should walk towards them who are without—and this, as Christians at that time formed a suffering and outcast society in the world, was tantamount to telling them how they should conduct themselves to enemies who heaped upon them all sorts of injury, even to the length, if they could have achieved it, of their extermination. The subject therefore of the passage before us is, the right treatment, not of friends, but of adversaries—that great peculiarity in the ethics of the gospel, which conflicts most perhaps with the natural tendencies of the human heart, and by which it is most distinguished from all those moral systems which are of merely human origin.

This brings us to the consideration of what has often been advanced in argument, though not so much by speculative infidels as by worldly men, against what they deem to be the utterly romantic and impracticable morality of the New Testament—as if it were so transcendentally above the powers of our nature that it were altogether hopeless to think of realizing it in practice. It is not so much for a controversial object that we propose to meet this alleged difficulty, as for the purpose of doing away a certain mistaken sense of it in the minds even of honest and aspiring disciples, who are bent on the perfection of gospel obedience, but yet are paralysed in their efforts to attain it, by the felt impossibility of such precepts, or of such performances rather, as are here enjoined by the apostle, and had indeed been prescribed in still higher terms by the Saviour before him, who bids us not only do good to our enemies, but even love our enemies—not only rendering them acts of beneficence with the hand, but—far more arduous achievement—moulding our hearts into such a union with foes and persecutors as to bear a positive regard or affection towards them—thereby aggravating tenfold the hardships of the Christian obedience, just as it is more difficult to command the sensibilities or emotions of the inner, than it is to command the movements of the outer man. It is obvious that we shall not succeed in disposing of this objection to the morality of the gospel save on the strength of such considerations as might serve not only for the adjustment or satisfaction of a speculative difficulty, but for the practical guidance of those who are pressing onward to the things which are before, through every obstacle in the work and walk of their sanctification.

For this purpose it is not enough to tell us in the general, that what is impossible with man is possible with God—for that with Him all things are possible. Neither is it enough to tell us of the Spirit given in answer to our prayers, that He might help our infirmities and enable us to do all things. Nothing can be more true and nothing more important than these announcements; and indeed they may be said to form the reasons of the apostle John for his assertion, that the commandments are not grievous—even that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; or, as he expresses it elsewhere, 'Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world'—greater is the Spirit of God than the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience. All this is most true; but then we are not to imagine of the Spirit that in making man the subject of His operations, He thwarts or overbears the laws of man's moral machinery. He does not make inroad and innovation on the order and working of the human faculties. In particular, He does not repeal the affinity which obtains in the way of cause and effect between the view of a certain object in the mind, and the counterpart feeling or emotion awakened thereby in the heart. He does not thus traverse the fitnesses of things. For example, did He wish to fill the soul with a sense of beauty, it would be by sights or images of beauty, and not by sights or images of deformity. Did He wish to excite our compassion, it would not be by turning our thoughts on a scene of enjoyment, but on a scene of distress. Did He wish to disarm us of our anger, it would not be by causing us to dwell in memory on the injustice that we had suffered, but by the power of other considerations—fitted, and let me add, naturally fitted to call forth other and better sensibilities. And so if He wished us to love, even to love an enemy, it would be by the presentation to our notice of an object proper to be loved; and most certainly that object can never be moral turpitude—so as that we should look on the enemy who has evinced fraud or falsehood in the dealings that we have held with him, with aught like the love of moral complacency. These are still very general explanations; but general as they are, we hope it may appear already that it is not a mere theoretical explanation on which we are now to enter, but such as might help to set you on the right way for carrying the precepts of our text into accomplishment, and direct you aright for this purpose what you are to do, and how you are to turn yourselves.

Our first remark then is, that the apostle in these verses does not, immediately or expressly at least, enjoin how we are to feel towards enemies and persecutors, but what we are to do for them. It is action not affection, that he here speaks of—not the dispositions of the heart, but the deeds of the hand; and if it be a more practicable thing that we should compel ourselves to right bodily performances than call up right mental propensities, this may alleviate somewhat our dread of these precepts, as if they were wholly unmanageable or incompetent to humanity. Before then taking cognisance of what should be the inward temper of Christians to those who maltreat or oppress them, we would bid you remark that the outward conduct toward them is that which forms the literal subject-matter of the commandments here given. The disciples are in this place told, that whatever the inward risings of nature may be against those who injure and oppress, they are to utter no imprecations, but blessings upon their head—praying for those who despitefully use them: and that however nature may incline them to resent, they are at least not to retaliate—recompensing to no man evil for evil: and that, hard as it may be under their cruel provocations to keep unruffled minds and feel peaceably, they, as much as in them lies, are to live peaceably: and that however nature may prompt the desires of vengeance, they must wholly abstain from the deeds of vengeance—leaving these to Him whose rightful province it is, and who hath said that He will repay. Nay, they are wholly opposite deeds which we are called on to perform—to feed our enemy if he hunger, and give him drink if he thirst—so that, while it may not be the tendency of nature so to desire, our bidden obligation is so to do—for in so *doing* thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Finally, we are not to be overcome of evil; but if his treatment of us have been evil, our treatment of him must be good. In short, these various duties are set before us more as virtues of forbearance than as so many virtues of forgiveness; and to understand the distinction between them, the one should be looked to as bearing more of reference to the heart, and the other to the conduct. Forgiveness to be complete must be cordial, or rather, if not cordial, it is not forgiveness at all. One can imagine forbearance from all retaliation by the hand even while the heart tumultuates and suffers all the agitations of a fierce internal war under the brooding sense of wrong. This distinction perhaps might serve to allay in some degree our fear of being laid in this passage under a wholly impracticable requirement—seeing that in its first and most obvious aspect it speaks not so much of the inward will that we should cherish towards enemies, as of something more under control, our outward walk and conversation towards them.

But we must not disguise that acts, when but looked to in themselves, and apart from the affections which may have prompted them, like mere bodily exercise, profit but little. Grant that the duties here set before us, when viewed literally, are nothing more than deeds of forbearance. Yet we must not forget, that in every Christian virtue there is a spirit as well as a letter, and that according to the moral estimate of the gospel, the letter without the spirit is dead. And indeed on this very lesson of forbearance it is well that we can refer to the express quotation of "forbearing one another in love" (Eph. iv. 2). There is then something more enjoined on the followers of Jesus than a resolute abstinence from those deeds of hostility by which an injured man seeks to retaliate upon his adversary. He must not have the feeling of hostility against him. It is not enough that he worketh no ill. He must have the charity or love that worketh no ill; and not only that worketh no ill to his neighbour, but it must be in the spirit of love that he worketh no ill to his enemy. But to come at once to the duty in all its extent and all its arduousness, the distinct requirement laid on us by the Saviour is, that we should love our enemies. If, ere we can attain to this, we must make war with the most urgent propensities of nature, it is a warfare from which there is no discharge; and the question still remains, not only by what power (for this can be answered generally, and with the most perfect doctrinal or theological soundness, by replying, the power of the Spirit), but more than this, by what process, by what series of mental exercises on the part of the disciple, is the high spiritual achievement carried, of love, real inward cordial love, even to our deadliest enemies, to those who hate and calumniate and oppress and betray us?

To allege the doctrine of the Spirit in a merely general and unintelligent way, will not suffice for this explanation. It is no function of His to obliterate or confound the distinction between one virtue and another; and should we confound them in our thoughts, this may land us in a difficulty from which even He, so long as the misunderstanding continues, may not extricate us. That He can extricate us is a thing most certain—that He will extricate us is a thing to be hoped and prayed for. But then His very first step will be so to enlighten us in the knowledge of God's will, as to remove this misunderstanding—so as that we shall not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. To be fully equipped for the work of obedience, it seems indispensable that, in the language of the apostle, we should be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding—for then only shall we walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Even to begin aright the work of obedience, we must begin with knowledge—for ere we can do our duty, we must surely be first made to know what it really is; or ere we can rightly address ourselves to the work of practical Christianity, we must know what the things are which God actually requires of us. To make this plain by an example, let us recur to the two virtues already spoken of—those of forgiveness and forbearance. By forbearance I understand that we abstain from all retaliation on an enemy, whether he repents or not—whereas forgiveness, as I understand it, presupposes repentance. It is true that in many places of Scripture, forgiveness is enjoined briefly and absolutely, without any express notice of repentance as the condition or necessary accompaniment thereof. But then one part of Scripture qualifies another; and as to be spiritually wise we must compare spiritual things with spiritual —so to be scripturally wise, we must compare scriptural things with scriptural. 'If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.' This establishes the need of repentance in him whom we are required to forgive; and in so doing it alleviates our sense of difficulty—just as in another case, when we are told by one evangelist that they who *have* riches shall hardly enter the kingdom of God, there is a certain sense of relief from a feeling of the unattainable and the hopeless, when told by another evangelist, that they who *trust* in riches shall hardly enter that kingdom—a distinct and additional relief from that which we experience in the general announcement of both evangelists, even that though impossible with men, it is possible with God. It is a great matter to be precisely informed both of the actual thing to be done, and of the circumstances in which, as a duty, it is required of us. Now in the grace of forgiveness there is something more than an abstinence from revengeful deeds, or even from revengeful inclinations. Forgiveness from the heart implies more than this—not only that we should forget the injury, but that we should have the same feeling towards its author, be restored to the same state of mind in regard to him, as if the injury had never been committed. That the forgiveness be complete, that it be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, we should look on him, not merely with the same sense of security, but even with the same moral complacency as if he were a faultless man—viewing him just as we should have done, that is, with the same confidence and esteem, as if the offence had been blotted altogether out of our recollection, or as if he himself had never been an offender. Now to feel thus on our part, we should hold repentance upon his part to be wholly indispensable—or that repentance is as indispensable to forgiveness as the element of light is to vision. The Spirit, in the working of miracles, might cure a man of his blindness, but we never expect that He will enable him to see in the dark; and no more should we expect that He will enable us to rejoice over the resolutely and contemptuously impenitent—just as we might rejoice, after we had fully readmitted him to friendship and respect, over the sinner who hath repented. We might abstain from the acts of retaliation, even under all the provocations which in the state of his hardihood and defiance we suffer at his hands. But this is forbearance only—not forgiveness. To have the full affection of forgiveness, such a forgiveness as the father of the returning prodigal extended so promptly and freely to his son, the hardihood must be dissolved and done away, the defiance be no longer persisted in. There is a difference between forbearance and forgiveness; and in adaptation to this, there is a counterpart difference between the objects of these two virtues. And the whole difference seems to lie in this, that the one has not repented—the other has, or at least stands with the profession and the aspect of repentance before us. We do not think that even the Spirit, who is given to help our infirmities, ever helps or enables us to forgive in any other circumstances than these. His great office is that of restoring us to the likeness of God, or making us perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Now though He be a God ready to forgive, His forgiveness is only to the penitent. Under the economy of grace, the forgiveness of the Sovereign and repentance of the sinner are never separated. And on this footing also are we required to forgive one another, to forgive as God does—so that repentance in every instance is presupposed, when called on, as we are by the apostle, to forgive our fellow-men, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us.

Now the like explanation applies to the duty of forbearance, or to all the duties of the passage now before us, which too might be done, we apprehend—not with that violence to our moral nature which is figured by many, and which leads them to view a performance as impracticable—but done sweetly and spontaneously and in the spirit of love. One can imagine a fixed, resolute, and dogged abstinence, if I may so call it, from all the deeds of retaliation—even under provocations and insults the most galling to nature which can be thought of; and this were forbearance in act, or literal forbearance. But in these circumstances to forbear in love, is that which looks so hard of execution, so incongruous with the very frame and constitution of the heart, as shall amount to a moral or mental impossibility. If the Spirit, in acting on the possessor of this heart, do not overbear its mechanism or the law of its workings—then, to do away the sense of a difficulty insuperable, when called on to forbear one another in love—though even our deadliest enemies, something more would require to be said than merely that what we cannot do of ourselves the Spirit can do in us and for us—something more specific than the bare generality, that though with men it is impossible, with God all things are possible.

And so we have always deemed it a great alleviation of the felt and the feared difficulty, when, attending to the distinction between various kinds of love, we come to understand what the love of forbearance really is. There is no assurance, however strong, of aids and influences from on high, which would ever make us believe it possible that we should love the man who in hatred to ourselves does with all falsehood and cruelty inflict upon us every species of wrong, with the love of moral esteem or moral complacency. To suppose for a moment that the Spirit, in effecting the work of our renovation, would so change our nature as to make us love our enemy thus, were just as great an outrage on the possibility of things, as to suppose that He would change the nature of virtue, would turn evil into good and good into evil. That we should be required to take into our esteem the man who stands palpably before us in the character of a treacherous friend or a bloodthirsty persecutor, is just as inconceivable as that we should be required to love the iniquity which God hateth—an achievement this no more to be attempted or thought of, than to hate the righteousness which God loveth. And likeness to Him is the great object of that regenerative process which, under the economy of the gospel, we are made to undergo—so as to make it very sure, that when we suffer from the hand of an enemy, whether he be the calumniator who falsely and ungratefully asperses our name, or the wily practitioner in business or in law, who has designs upon our property, or finally, the bloodthirsty persecutor who lays violence upon our persons—then we need not try, for really we are not bidden, to love that man with the love of moral complacency.

Still we are required to love even such a man, and if not the love of complacency, what love is it? There is a love distinct from this, even the love of kindness—which when felt towards one in distress, is modified into the love of compassion. Of its operation in the breast, apart from the love of moral esteem, we have a high example in the breast of the Godhead—when He so loved the world, as to send His only-begotten Son into it. What then precisely was that love of which the apostle speaks, when he says—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins?" It could not be the love of moral complacency, for it was love to a world lying in wickedness. It was the love of compassion, and of compassion on creatures arrayed in enmity and lifting up the cry of rebellion against Him. Because of their wickedness it could not possibly be the love of complacency; but because of their wretchedness it was the love of pity: and the inquiry is—Whether, while there is a like impossibility in our regarding with aught of moral esteem a dishonest or a despiteful adversary—whether still there might not be a something about him fitted to engage our sympathies on his behalf, so as not only to restrain our hand from all mischief against him, but so as that we could not find it in our heart to do him harm—nay, so as to make it abundantly possible that we should both pity and should pray for him.

And now that we have got clear of this impracticable element, for we really cannot love morally a wicked adversary—the thing with man is impossible, and though with God all things are possible, yet this most assuredly is an impossibility over which even His Spirit will not help us; but now that this difficulty has been set aside, and it is granted that in the case of a deceitful and malicious enemy there is nothing in his character because of which we can love him morally—still might there not be something in his state because of which we can love him kindly, love him compassionately? It may be true that we cannot at present forgive—for as yet there may be no symptom of repentance on his part; but in the career of a resolved impenitence may he be fully set, either on the artifices of a hostile policy or on the cruelties of a hostile violence against us. And it may also be true, that *in his present state* we can find nothing to compassionate—for he might be prospering in his way, and in the hey-day of success be rejoicing in his iniquitous triumph over us. But though there be nothing palpable to the eye of sense which can move our pity, it is for the Christian to look onward and with an eye of anticipation to the things which, if he be not previously visited with the spirit of repentance, shall happen to him shortly—to the agonies of his coming deathbed, when, a helpless and a prostrate creature, all triumph shall be gone; or to the still more awful day of his last reckoning, when he shall stand a naked and a trembling culprit before the dread judgment-seat; or, looking on him in the light of eternity to the never-ending period of that vengeance, which it is for God alone to minister, and from which therefore He bids us refrain our own hand. Did we but realize all this, then should we find, that though we cannot yet forgive, even now we may forbear, and that in the midst of cruellest provocation—forbear in love too, for though to the tyrant or the tormentor the love of complacency may be impossible, yet is it possible to love even him with tenderest compassion, as we behold in perspective the sentence and with it the tremendous sufferings which await him.

Thus at all times, and even in the worst imaginable case, might the love of forbearance and pity be practicable; and there are even cases, though not of conscious or resolved iniquity, yet of blind infuriated violence, in which an outlet is given for the higher love of forgiveness. There are cases of ignorance. It was on this ground that Paul obtained mercy though a persecutor, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. This too was the palliation which Peter alleged for the murderers of our Saviour—"And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"—"for had they known it," it is said elsewhere, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." It is in striking accordance with this—and it serves to establish on the highest authority the need of certain prerequisites in the objects of forgiveness—that our Saviour prays thus amid the agonies of His crucifixion—"Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do.*"

But the duties of our present text are those of forbearance; and though it should be forbearance in love, yet there is no incompatibility between the object and its counterpart emotion. For we are expressly bidden look forward to the vengeance which awaits our persecutors, when we are bidden abstain from all vengeance ourselves; and there is no such incompatibility, we repeat, between the sight of a creature in torment and our love of pity, as there is between the sight of a creature doing palpable iniquity, and our feeling as complacently towards him as we should towards an innocent or deserving man. The requirement here laid upon us inflicts no jar or felt infraction on any law of our nature. True, it calls for a strenuous effort; but this is mainly and properly an effort of consideration, which as being on things future and unseen, is an effort of faith. It is the effort of a mind looking forward to the day of retribution, to the dread realities of a coming judgment and coming eternity. That in the strength of this faith we can forbear and love and pity and pray for even our deadliest enemies, and are thus enabled to lay an arrest on the most urgent propensities of aggrieved and suffering nature—is a glorious verification of the power ascribed to faith in the New Testament. It is in truth our great instrument by which to achieve the sublimest moralities of the gospel; for not only doth it work by love, but overcometh the world. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is not overcome of evil, but gains the noblest of all victories over a world lying in wickedness, by overcoming its evil with good.

We must now quit the general argument, and finish our lecture by a very few explanatory remarks on the two or three verses of this passage which seem to call for them.

In the seventeenth verse it may appear somewhat out of place, as not altogether in keeping with the subject-matter of the other precepts, when the apostle tells his disciples to provide things honest in the sight of all men. But the truth is, that nothing is more graceful in the eyes of others than the grace of forbearance; and nothing more fitted to engage the sympathy of bystanders, than a mild and patient demeanour under injuries, more especially if it be the obvious effect of conscience and not of cowardice, not a pusillanimous surrender of one's-self to the insolence of oppression, but an act of obedience to the high behests of principle. It is thus that in early times the Christian religion was indebted for much of its progress to the gentleness of converts under persecution; and so among the other sustaining forces which upheld in the breasts of these devoted men the charity that endureth all things, was there the exalted motive of adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour, that it might find a growing esteem and readier acceptance in the world.

In the eighteenth verse it is evidently supposed that it might not be possible even for the best of Christians, and that it might not lie within the capacities of his moral system, to live peaceably with all men. He must first be pure and then peaceable; and till the first object is secured, it is his part not to acquiesce but to contend earnestly. And then as to what lies in him, let me state, by way of one example, that it is not in him to look complacently on moral evil. He cannot though he would; and neither will the Spirit help him to this, or put this in him. And thus he might forbear, though he cannot justify—even though his enemy should seek for more than toleration, should seek an express approval or vindication at his hands. This he cannot do with truth or honour, and therefore will not do at all; and hence a contest which he cannot heal, or one case among others which could be named in which peace is impossible.

In the nineteenth verse we are told to give place unto wrath—not to our own wrath, for this we are forbidden, just as elsewhere we are forbidden to give place unto the devil. We must not give range or license to any resentful feelings of our own; but the meaning is—either that we give place to the wrath of our enemy, not resisting but rather giving way before him; or, that we leave the matter to God, and do not pre-occupy by any vengeance of ours, that vengeance which it is for Him alone to inflict—and so commit ourselves to Him who judgeth righteously.

And lastly, by heaping coals of fire on the head of an enemy, we should understand, that in returning him good for evil, and persisting in this till we shall have heaped our kindnesses upon him—it will either melt his spirit into another and a gentler mood; or, failing this, it will aggravate his condemnation.

In conclusion, let me observe, that persecution may again revisit these lands; or though not, that still in ordinary life, under the domestic roof, or amid the familiar dealings of human society, there is ample scope for the wrongs and the heart-burnings of most grievous injustice, and therefore full and constant opportunity for the exercise of those virtues which are here prescribed to us. By the sacrifice of our natural interests, or what is still more difficult, as being at times well-nigh uncontrollable, by the sacrifice of our natural resentments, we prepare the way for those highest of all conquests in the world, the conquests of principle. We set forth the graces of personal Christianity, and exhibit it to men both in the most sublime and the loveliest of its aspects. It is not when we are buffeted for our faults and take it patiently, but when we suffer for well-doing and take it patiently—it is then that the glory of religion is advanced upon the earth. Then it is that we are both acceptable to God and approved of men.

LECTURE XCII.

ROMANS XIII. 1-7.

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

There are certain speculatists in social and political philosophy, who would measure the duty of subjection by what they are pleased to imagine the right of sovereignty, and would make the one depend upon the other—so that there shall be no incumbent loyalty on the one side, unless there is a legally constituted government on the other. And thus to make out the obligation of subjects, they would go back on the theory of an original compact, and carry us upward to the first construction of society, and tell us of rights elective and rights hereditary; and on the basis of certain juridical dogmata, would assign how much or how little it is that the individual members of a community owe in the way of allegiance to the actual rulers, who, whether rightfully or not, yet really and by actual possession and exercise bear authority over them. It has long appeared to us, that the Bible cuts short all this reasoning, in that while it defines the duty of the subject, it does not define the nature or composition of the government to which that duty is owing. It does not say that we should be subject to the powers which were rightly originated or have been rightly constituted, but subject to the powers that be. It is not the kind or character of any government, but the existence of it which invests it with its claim on our obedience, or at least which determines for us the duty of yielding subjection thereunto. Its mandates should be submitted to, not because either law or justice or respect for the good of humanity presided over the formation of it, but simply because it exists. It is true that the apostle affirms of those powers to which he requires our subjection, that they are ordained of God; but this is merely because they are the powers that be, and in the sense that whatever is is ordained of God. It is He who overrules all history; and to His sovereign will do we refer the rise and continuance of all the actual dynasties in our world—although in their establishment, fraud and force and barbaric cruelty, and that wrath of man which He so often makes to praise Him, may have been the instruments of His pleasure. It is thus that the duty of our text is of universal application, whatever be the country, and amid all the political diversities which obtain on the face of our globe—insomuch that the Christian who lives in Turkey or China, or under any of the iron despotisms of the East, is as much bound to obedience by this unexcepted law of the New Testament, as if his lot were cast in those more favoured regions of civilisation and equitable rule, where all the caprices and the cruelties of arbitrary power are unknown.

And to this order of actual power in the world, there seems a perfect analogy in the order of this world's property. No one thinks of remounting to a distant antiquity—so as to take a view of its origination, or to ascertain in how far justice presided over the first distribution of it, and conducted it onward through its successive descents and exchanges to the hands of its actual occupiers. What is true of the powers that be, holds also true of the properties that be. The same deference is rendered to both of them—and that too in the utter ignorance of every other claim than actual existence or actual possession. Such is the strength indeed of this felt possessory right, that both law and nature do like obeisance to it; and many thousands are the estates seized upon in days of marauding violence, the boundaries of which are as sacred from encroachment, as if they had been fixed in an assembly of righteous sages, or by the awards of a judgment-seat. It is better that the embers of long past injustice should be extinguished, or the wrongs of other centuries be forgotten than that they should so fester and be kept alive, as to perpetuate and accumulate the heart-burnings of the world, or unsettle the present order of society. It is thus that both our subjection to the actual powers, and our acquiescence in the actual properties which are upon the earth, seem to rest on the same foundation of divine wisdom—whether as put forth in the lessons of revelation, or as manifested in that constitution of humanity which God hath given to us.

And let it not be said, that by this doctrine of an entire unconditional passiveness, oppression and injustice must at length have unlimited sway upon the earth. God hath provided a security against this in the reactions of outraged nature. But still it is nature which both prompts and executes the resistance; and not Christianity, the disciples of which, in their simple, self-denying, and elevated walk of duty, but act in the spirit of their high calling, when they abandon this and many more such offices to others; or when, in the language of our Saviour's injunction, they leave the dead to bury their dead. And God will not leave them to suffer for their meekness and forbearance even in this world, but will gloriously accredit every promise and every declaration which He has made in their favour. It is a manifold experience, we believe, in private life, that the humble and the patient and the long-suffering, as if shielded by an invisible defence against all violence from without, do walk more safely and more prosperously than others through the world; and on a large scale too will the same experience be verified—insomuch as to be found both morally and historically impossible, that a tyrant shall long bear the rule over a Christianized nation.

It is hoped that by these preparatory remarks we have anticipated the necessity of entering much into detail upon the verses of this passage.

Ver. 1.—'The powers that be are ordained of God,' because not only with His permission, but by His providence in the sovereign disposal of all things, they have been established in the world.

Ver. 2.—'Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.' The lesson of our last lecture graduates into the lesson of our present one by a nearer and more natural transition than a cursory reader may apprehend. You were then told to resist not persons, you are now told to resist not powers. The one non-resistance was a duty, even when assailed by unlawful violence; and how much more then is the other non-resistance a duty, when the mandates of a rightful authority are brought to bear upon us—for in every country, the authority in force at the time being, or the authority of its actual recognised government, is the ordinance of God. The existing property and the existing power are both of them the ordinances of God, who, in the progress of events under His own absolute direction and control, hath determined for every man the bounds of his habitation. It were by the violation of one commandment, if we encroached on the property; and it were the violation of another to resist the power. There is a certain metaphysical jurisprudence which hath mystified, and would attempt to subvert, both of these obligations. But scripture is alike clear and alike imperative with each of them; and its dictates, we are persuaded, will be found best to accord with the real philosophy of human nature, as well as with the peace and good order of human society.

Ver. 3-5.—'For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.' The apostle speaks not only of the proper design, but also, we are persuaded, of the general and actual effect of all government. We believe that in every land, the institution, even when administered by the most hateful of tyrants, is productive of good upon the whole. It is true, that in the career of savage and ambitious despots bent on personal aggrandizement, and in whose hands crime is the familiar instrument of conquest, whether over the thrones of other nations or the liberties of their own—it is most true, that in their career we read of little else than of those sufferings and sad disorders which history has so often recorded in characters of blood. Still in every such economy—we mean of laws with power for the enforcement of them, we hold that there is an immense preponderance of good to society—insomuch that the worst of governments will bear to be contrasted with a state of anarchy. Like every other property or power, whether of mental or material nature, it is in the hands of wicked men, occasionally, nay often, perverted from its own proper and beneficent end—yet notwithstanding this, and apart from this, it in its own essential character is a pre-eminent blessing to the world. Amid all its conspicuous aberrations, we must not forget the many thousand benefits, which, beyond the reach of sight or of calculation, it works in each little vicinity, and throughout the mass and interior of every nation, in the maintenance of peace and equity between man and man—a mighty interest this, which it is never the policy of any government to contravene; and seldom, if ever, the wish even of the most capricious and bloodthirsty tyrant, whose ambition would in no conceivable way be subserved by the dissolution of all the social ties in that community over which the providence of God has placed him. Let but the controlling and regulating power wherewith he is invested cease from its operation; and the vast importance of such a power for the general wellbeing would soon be felt, after that society had fallen to pieces, and, without a king or without a government, each man did that which was right in his own eyes. Verily law or government is the minister of God for good; and in the great bulk and majority of their doings the administrators thereof are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. If then we have just been taught in the former passage to resist not evil, when assailed by the unbridled violence of evil men, how much more should we abstain from the resistance of that which is good, even of that government under which we live, and which is God's own ordinance—and whose function it is to protect us from evil. For, generally speaking, rulers are not as individuals often are—who, at the instigation of envy or avarice or hatred, may at times do grossest injury to the righteous. The loyal and peaceable have nothing to fear from laws which they do not offend; but if ever brought before the judgment-seat, to be taken cognisance of by these, will obtain sentence of acquittal or justification at their hands. They are the evil, the criminal, who need to be afraid; for the very design of a civil government in society, which is at once the effect and evidence of God's moral government in the world,* is to repress and punish all such. His institution will not be frustrated, or fail of that express purpose for which it has been set up among men, which is not only to protect the innocent, but to execute vengeance on the evil-doer—being armed with the power of the sword to fulfil the resentment which it feels against the disobedient. Did our attention stop short at the secondary ordinance, did we look no higher than to the judge or the magistrate—even then, to shun their wrath, we should yield subjection to government and law; but when we rise upward from the earthly to the heavenly Sovereign, and with the apostle view the authority that is beneath as an emanation or derivation from the authority of Him who ruleth over all—then will our subjection be rendered, not alone from fear towards man, but also from conscience towards God.

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* See Butler's Analogy.

Ver. 6, 7.—'For, for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.' The apostle now passes from the institution of law in the general, to the institution of tribute, and which he here singles out as part and parcel of the same, and thus too coming directly from God—the payment of which, therefore, we should not only render as a thing of force that we must do, but as a thing of conscience that we ought to do. It is a lesson greatly needed in this our day—that the payment of our taxes should be held as much a matter of principle and punctuality as the payment of our debts. Indeed it is regarded by the apostle as quite on the footing of a debt, being included by him in the general precept of—"Render unto all their dues." It is a lesson altogether worthy of strenuous and repeated enforcement from the pulpit—from which there ought to be exposed and denounced with all fidelity, the shameful laxity which obtains in this department of moral obligation. It is a most befitting topic for the ministrations of a clergyman; and it were well could he lay open with a vigorous and faithful hand, the frauds, the concealments, the dexterous and unprincipled evasions which are often practised to the injury of the public revenue—and by men too who acquit themselves honourably and with perfect fairness of all their private engagements. There is a hebetude of conscience on this subject which needs the quickening of an earnest and solemn and scriptural representation. This were not to secularize religion; but what is mainly wanted, it were to sanctify the business of human life. Whatever can be fixed upon as a test of religious sincerity, must be deemed peculiarly valuable, both by the minister who feels it his business to hold up, and that in all its features and details, a true picture of Christianity to his hearers; and also by all honest disciples, who, intent on their own personal sanctification, press onward to the high object of standing perfect and complete in the whole will of God. That is a fatal error which would dissever the social from the sacred; or which looks on a great part of the moralities of human conduct, though specified and prescribed in the Bible, merely as so many week-day proprieties. It is now high time that Christianity should stand forth in another aspect, and that another exhibition of it should be given to the world—not as a system of cabalistic dogmata, but as a pervading and living principle, which takes ascendency over the whole man, and graves upon the tablet of his character all that is lovely and honourable and virtuous and of good report. This is the way to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things—not to dissociate religion from morality, but to impregnate morality with religion, and make it out and out the guide and the sovereign of all our actions. We are aware that a certain feeling of the strange and even of the ludicrous is often awakened, when such topics are handled graphically and experimentally in the pulpit, as purloining, and eye-service, and fair dealing, and the full and regular payment of taxes—or when men of various conditions are plainly spoken to on the duties of their respective callings, as household servants or field labourers or artizans or men in the walks of business, when severally addressed on the virtues of the shop and the market and the exchange and the counting-house. Now all this proceeds on an utter misconception as to what sort of thing Christianity is; and because of which we forget that godliness has to do with all things—insomuch that ere a disciple can be perfected into a complete man of God, he must be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. He must be a good family man, and a good neighbour, and a good member of society; and finally, to return on the observations which the apostle here lays upon his converts, he must be a good subject, in which capacity he will pay custom or tribute with cheerfulness, and reverence his superiors, and award his comely and complaisant homage to station and rank in society—and, giving fear to whom fear is due, will first and foremost, in the words of another apostle, "fear God;" and honour to whom honour, he will follow out the injunction of the same apostle, to "honour the king;" and will obey magistrates; and live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. This is the way of making his light shine before men—so that seeing his good works, they may glorify his Father who is in heaven.

A government in the discharge of its ordinary functions is a great blessing to society; and it is upon this consideration that the duties of the passage now under review are grounded and enforced by the apostle. But a government may depart from its proper and ordinary character; and, instead of a protector, may become a tyrant and a persecutor. It may abuse its powers. The sword of justice in its hands, it may wield as an instrument of iniquitous violence — turning it from its own righteous purpose as an instrument of vengeance on rebels and murderers. Instead of this, it may become a murderer itself, and bathe its feet in the blood of the innocent. And the question is, What is duty towards a government in this new attitude and style of acting; and when, no longer a minister to them for good, it becomes an executioner of wrath on the peaceable and the praiseworthy—the terror and scourge of the righteous?

This question has been already answered in the chapter immediately before our present one—where we are told to bless them which persecute, to give place unto wrath, to avenge not ourselves. And it has not only been answered didactically in the Bible, but has been answered historically and by example during three long centuries of persecution—beginning with the Author of our faith, and continued onward to the reign of Constantine. If when the hand of a private individual inflicted outrage and injustice upon them, they were commanded to forbear all retaliation—this forbearance was still more imperative when it was an injustice which came from the hands of the magistrate. And accordingly, in those ages of martyrdom we have a bright verification of the meek and passive moralities—of the virtues which belong to a state of sufferance—so strenuously recommended by the apostle. And it was not only in the feebleness of their infancy, when the Christians formed but a very little flock, amid the overwhelming majorities that abode in the ancient faith, whether of Jews or Gentiles—it was not only then that they gave themselves quietly up to torture and death, as if in imitation of their great Master, who was led like a lamb unto the slaughter — but even in the strength and maturity of their manhood, when they far outnumbered their adversaries, and could have taken the power of government into their own hands—even then do we read of their weathering in meek endurance the last and bloodiest of those great persecutions which they had to undergo. They might have risen against their enemies, and achieved over them the victory of force — but, still more glorious, theirs was altogether the victory of principle; and it serves for our admonition, on whom the latter ends of the world have come. Should the fires of persecution be again lighted up in our land—in the holy discipline of God, should this be again brought to bear upon us, as at once the test and the exercise of our Christianity—after such an example, and still more with such a lesson as the apostle has recorded for our guidance in the foregoing passage, we should know how to acquit ourselves. We should, for conscience toward God, endure the grief and suffer wrongfully. We should take it patiently. We should commit ourselves to Him that judgeth righteously. We should leave to Him the cause of our redress, and that work which is exclusively His own, the work of vengeance. If we want to obtain a like conquest with our predecessors in the Church, then not overcome of evil ourselves, we shall overcome the evil with good.

Still in the very passage from which we have borrowed some of these expressions, there is a limitation imposed on our duty of "living peaceably with all men." This is only if it be possible, and as much as lieth in us. Now we have already stated in what circumstances it might not be possible to yield a pacific acquiescence in the will of a private individual—so that if he is resolutely bent on our compliance with it, a rupture between us is wholly unavoidable. We could not, for example, give up our conscience into his hands, or renounce a profession or a principle which we conceive to have been laid upon us by the authority of God. And thus it was that the apostle's converts could not have given up their Christianity at the bidding of friends or relatives—a fertile cause of dissension in those days; and so as to verify the forewarning of our Saviour, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And if they would not submit in this matter to a relative or neighbour, they could as little submit in it to a magistrate. They could not belie their own faith, or say of what they did believe, that they did not believe it. There is the same impossibility here which is even affirmed of the Godhead, when it is said of Him that He cannot lie, and that it is impossible for God to lie. If the faith of the gospel was indeed in them, then it lay not in them, nor was it possible for them to abjure that faith. Nay, as if to aggravate the moral impossibility, they could not, at the bidding of the highest power on earth, make the denial of Christ, save in opposition to an express bidding from the highest power in heaven, by which they were required to confess Him before men, even when delivered up to councils, and brought before governors and kings for a testimony. And what had thus been laid upon them by precept, they exemplified in practice—as when called before the rulers of Israel, and straitly threatened and commanded not to teach or preach in the name of Jesus, they replied—"Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot"—and here is their express allegation of its not being possible for them to live peaceably with all men—"we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." And so with boldness they continued to speak, "not as pleasing men but God"—and this under the necessity which was laid upon them, for wo was upon them if they preached not the gospel (1 Cor. ix. 16). To the superficial it may appear an anomaly, nay a contradiction, that the same Christians who were charged with the duty of resisting not evil, should nevertheless have resisted so sturdily upon this occasion; and it seems to deepen still more the inconsistency, that it was a resistance to the mandates of those rulers, who, as the powers that be, were ordained of God—so that whosoever resisteth them resisteth the ordinance of God, and shall receive to himself damnation. But theirs was not a withholding of fear where fear was due. It was but the subordination of a lower to a higher fear—the fear of him who was able to kill the body, to the fear of Him who was able to destroy both soul and body in hell. They did not resist the inflictions of the earthly power on their persons and properties, and all on earth which belonged to them. These they submitted to the absolute disposal of the rulers of this world; and it may serve perhaps the object of a right discrimination in this matter of resistance—if in the following verse where the term is introduced, it be considered what precisely that was which Christians are there spoken of as resisting. The apostle in the Hebrews tells his disciples that they had not yet "resisted unto blood, striving against sin." This was wholly different from the resistance of war, when the soldier strives against those who are seeking after his blood; and for the deliverance of his own life, would imbrue his hand in the blood of an enemy. This is one way of resisting unto blood; but it is altogether distinct from, nay opposite to, the resistance unto blood which Christians were often called to in those days. The object of their resistance was not to save their own blood by shedding the blood of their enemies. It was not against this that they strove, or against their enemies that they strove. The precise object of their striving was against sin—the sin of renouncing their profession, and thus denying the Lord who bought them. This at all hazards they behoved to resist. Against this, and this alone, they strove; and as to their lordly persecutors, instead of striving against them, they placidly and submissively gave themselves up unto their hands.

And thus too, at this moment, the Church of Scotland—submitting to the civil power in all that is civil, and only refusing her obedience, when that power assumes an authority over things sacred,—many not being able, perhaps not willing, to discriminate in this matter, she suffers at their hand the obloquy of being a rebel against the laws—and this because one of the subordinate Courts in our realm has transgressed her own limits, even as the Sanhedrim or supreme court of Judea, did theirs, when they forbade the apostles to preach any more in the name of Jesus. It is a great and a vital cause; and has led to a contest which is not yet terminated, and perhaps only begun. Heaven grant an apostolic wisdom, as well as an apostolic boldness, on the part of her ministers—that they may acquit themselves rightly of all which they owe both to God and to Cæsar; and so that, while faithful to their Master in heaven, their loyalty to the powers which be on earth may, in all that is possible, and as far as lieth in them, become patent and palpable to all men. Meanwhile, in the eyes of some she may wear the aspect of a refractory member in the body politic, more especially in an age when the principles are forgotten on which our Non-erastian Church is based—principles which at one time the sustained and at length triumphant controversy of several generations had made as familiar as household words, even to the peasantry of our land. O Lord, may Thy grace and Thy guidance be with the present majority of our Church—so that whether they shall achieve a victory or sustain a defeat, Wisdom may yet be justified of all her children. If theirs be the victory, let it become manifest, O God, that a rightly administered, and withal an Established Church, in the full possession of her spiritual independence, is the great palladium, not of freedom alone, but of stability and good order in the commonwealth. But if it seem good unto Thee that it shall be otherwise, and that defeat and disappointment shall be theirs—we will not let go our confidence in the final and everlasting establishment of Thine own divine supremacy over the nations—when, after it may be the fearful period of a wasteful and wide-spread anarchy, the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LECTURE XCIII.

ROMANS XIII. 8-10.

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

'Owe no man anything.' This precept of the apostle, limited within these few words, may signify one or other of these two things—either to leave not our debts unpaid; or higher, and many would say more scrupulous still, never get into debt. The clause now quoted of our present verse may be looked to as a repetition of the clause in that verse which goes immediately before it—"Render unto all their dues"—what is due (*debitum*, debt), being the same with what is owing. And in this form too it admits of both the interpretations now given—either let every debt be at length cancelled, or let no debt ever be contracted. Never let it become a debt—Be in no man's books. If he be an individual with whom you are dealing, pay the moment that you buy; or if it be the Government, and so the liability is not a price but a tax, pay on the day that it becomes due. According to the usages of society, the injunction in this latter or more rigorous meaning of it is far from being generally adhered to. Perhaps it may not at all times suit the conveniences or even the possibilities of business, that each single transaction should be what in familiar phrase is termed a ready money transaction. Perhaps even in the matters of family expenditure, it might save trouble, instead of paying daily and in detail, to pay at certain terms; and so with the consent, nay even the preference of both parties, is there often a running of accounts, and a discharge or settlement of these periodically. We shall not therefore insist very resolutely or dogmatically on this rule of the apostle, in the literal or extreme sense of it. Perhaps it were an over-sensitive casuistry, a sort of ultraism in morals, to urge the unexcepted observance of our text in the very terms of this its second interpretation. There can be no doubt, however, that in the first interpretation of it, it is a matter of absolute and universal obligation. Though we cannot just say with full and perfect assurance, that a man should never in any circumstances get into debt—we can feel no hesitation in saying, that once in he should labour most strenuously and with all his might to get out of it. I will not therefore be so altogether intolerant and peremptory, as to give it forth in the style of an aphorism or dictation—that he should never become a debtor to any man, be it for a single month or even a single day. Yet will we proclaim it as a very high and undoubted ethical propriety—that each man, if in business, should so square his enterprises to his means, or, if in whatever else, should so square his expenditure to his income, as to be at all times within the limits of sufficiency or safety—so that, should the computation at any time be made, and were the settlement of all reckonings and claims whatsoever to take place at the moment accordingly, it should be found of him at the very least, that in customary phrase he was even with the world, and owed no man anything.

But though unwilling to press the duty of our text in the extreme and rigorous sense of it, yet I would fain aspire towards the full and practical establishment thereof, so as that the habit might become at length universal, not only of paying all debts, but even of making conscience never to contract, and therefore never to owe any. For although this might never be reached, it is well it should be looked at, nay, moved forward to, as a sort of optimism, every approximation to which were a distinct step in advance, both for the moral and economic good of society. For, first, in the world of trade, one cannot be insensible to the dire mischief that ensues from the spirit often so rampant, of an excessive and unwarrantable speculation—so as to make it the most desirable of all consummations that the system of credit should at length give way, and what has been termed the ready-money system, the system of immediate payments in every commercial transaction, be substituted in its place. The adventurer who in the walks of merchandise trades beyond his means, is often actuated by a passion as intense, and we fear also as criminal, as is the gamester, who in the haunts of fashionable dissipation, stakes beyond his fortune. But it is not the injury alone which the ambition that precipitates him into such deep and desperate hazards brings upon his own character—neither is it the ruin that the splendid bankruptcy in which it terminates brings upon his own family; these are not the only evils which we deprecate—for over and above these, there is a far heavier disaster, a consequence in the train of such proceedings, of greatly wider and more malignant operation still, on the habit and condition of the working classes, gathered in hundreds around the mushroom establishment, and then thrown adrift among the other wrecks of its overthrow in utter helplessness and destitution on society. This frenzy of men hasting to be rich, like fever in the body natural, is a truly sore distemper in the body politic. No doubt they are also sufferers themselves, piercing their own hearts through with many sorrows; but it is the contemplation of this suffering in masses, which the sons and daughters of industry in humble life so often earn at their hands, that has ever led me to rank them among the chief pests and disturbers of a commonwealth.

But, again, if they who trade beyond their means thus fall to be denounced, they, especially in the higher and middle classes of life, who spend beyond their means and so run themselves into debt, merit the same condemnation. Perhaps they who buy on credit, certain of their inability to pay, as compared with those who borrow on speculation, and though uncertain of its proceeds yet count on the favourable chances of success, so as that they shall be able to pay all—perhaps the former are distinctly the more inexcusable of the two. But without entering on this computation, we can imagine nothing more glaringly unprincipled and selfish than the conduct of those who, to uphold their place and take part with their fellows in the giddy rounds of the festive and fashionable world, force out a splendour and luxury to which their means are unequal; and thus either build or adorn or entertain in a style so costly, that it must be done not at their own expense, beggared as they are by extravagance, but at the expense of tradesmen and artificers and shop-keepers, whom they hurry onward to beggary with themselves. I do not need to expatiate on a delinquency so grievous and undeniable as this. But you will at once perceive, how both the rage of speculation, prompted by what the apostle calls the lust of the eye, in the work of making a fortune; and the rage of exhibition and excess, stimulated by the pride of life, in the work of overspending it—the one sowing the wind, and the other reaping the whirlwind—how both of these would be effectually mitigated and kept in check, were all men to act on the sacred prohibition of—" Owe no man anything."

But, lastly, there is another application of this precept, to me the most interesting of all—because of all others the application, which if fully carried out, would tell more beneficially than any other on that high object of enlightened philanthropy, the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and so make a larger contribution than any we have yet specified to the wellbeing of a then happy and healthful society. What I advert to as a thing of pre-eminent worth and importance is, that men in humble life, our artizans, our mechanics, and labourers, should be effectually taught in the art of owing no man anything; and learn to find their way from the pawn-office to the savings' bank—so that, instead of debtors to the one, they should become depositors in the other. That it is not so, is far more due to the want of management than to the want of means; and it needs but the kindness and trouble of a few benevolent attentions to put many on the way of it. It is this which, among other objects, makes it so urgently desirable, that every town should be broken up into small enough parishes, and every parish into small enough districts, and an official superintendent be attached to each, who, in perfect keeping with his character as a deacon, might charge himself with the economics of the poor, and tell them how so to husband their resources as to save themselves from a sore and heavy burden, which often presses on them like an incubus that they never can shake off—we mean the debt usually contracted at the outset of a family establishment, and which keeps them in a state of difficulty and dependence to the end of their days. It is not to be told how soon and how easily by a few cheap and simple and withal friendly advices, the whole platform of humble life might come to be raised, and the working classes be guided to an enlargement and sufficiency, which, save by dint of their own sobriety and providential habits, can never be realized. Though we cannot offer here the scientific demonstration of this great and glorious result, we may at least be suffered, as an act of homage, to make this acknowledgment in passing—that, in the practical department of Christianity, only second to our admiration of its perfect ethical system, is the admiration we have ever felt, and the unbounded confidence that we repose in the sound political economy of the New Testament.

'But to love one another.' The apostle here speaks of love as a debt, as a thing owing. He would have it to be our only debt; and that this alone is what we should still continue to owe, after having so acquitted ourselves of all other obligations, as to owe nothing else. The point to be remarked upon is, that the apostle should speak of love as a debt at all, as a thing that we owe—thus placing in the same category the duty under which we lie to love one another, as the duty to pay up the price of that which we had bought, or the sum that we had borrowed from another. It is certainly not so regarded in the light of natural conscience. We should never think that we did the same injustice to a neighbour by withholding our love from him, as we did to a creditor by withholding from him the payment of a debt. In that play or reciprocation of moral feeling and moral judgment which takes place between man and man in society, these two things are not so confounded. It is true that should God interpose with the commandment that we should so love, we owe everything to Him; and would therefore, on this being intimated to us as His will, owe love to those who are around us, and love to all men. But we at present speak of our natural sense of justice, as it decides and operates irrespectively of God's will in a community of human beings; and are considering how it would pronounce on the matter of obligation—between the duty of paying an ordinary debt, and the duty of loving.

Now we must be conscious of a wide diversity in our moral sensation, if I may so term it, of these two things. I feel that I have a right to the payment of that which is owing to me; and that for the exaction of it I might bring the fear and the force of law to bear upon my debtor. I have no such feeling of a right to his love; and did I assert or prosecute such a right, did I try to seize upon the man's affections in the same way that I might seize upon his goods, did I prefer a claim to his heart, and for the making of it good put either fear or force into operation—there would soon be found an element wanting, and which made this attempt at the compulsion of another's love to be altogether a thing most outrageously and ridiculously wrong. The question still remains then as to any possible analogy between things which at the first blush of them appear so different; and how it is, that while in the most strict and literal sense of the word we owe a man the full value of all that we may have bought or borrowed from him—how it is, that with any propriety or by means of any figurative resemblance, I can be said to owe him my love also.

What gives the strongest impression of a reciprocity in this matter, and brings it nearest to a thing of mutual and equitable obligation is, that celebrated moral sentence of our great Teacher —"Whatsoever things ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." Now we all would that men should love us, rather than that they should hate us; and it is a precept which at once announces its own equity, that what we should like from men, we should do to men. If we wish them to love us, it seems a selfish and unequitable thing that we should not love them back again; or that we should not be willing to give them that which we at the same time are abundantly willing to get from them. We do not just say, that even on this principle the obligation to love others is placed on the very same footing with the obligation to pay our debts—yet if on this principle we do not strictly and literally *owe* them our love, the moral sense of all men will go along with me when I say, that on this principle we at least *ought* to love them. Surely if we should like all men to love us, it is nothing but a fair and legitimate moral conclusion from this, that we in return should or ought to love all men. Now I would have you attend to the two terms, the *owe* and the *ought*. They have a common origin; and though not absolutely identical, this of itself demonstrates, if human language be at all the interpreter of human feeling, a certain affinity betwixt them. And accordingly they do substantially resemble each other thus far, that both of them—the payment of what we owe to others, and the love we are required to bear them—that both of these are duties. But though generally, and to this extent they are alike—still there is a difference between them; and on looking narrowly into it, we shall find what the difference is. In the one duty, the payment of debt, there is not merely an obligation upon the one side, there is a precise and counterpart right upon the other—it being not only my duty to pay what I owe to a creditor, but his right to challenge and enforce the payment. In the other duty, the love of a neighbour, it might be my obligation thus to love, but not necessarily his right to demand it of me. That there are other such duties will appear still more clearly from this example—the duty of forgiveness. Here there may be an obligation, and most certainly no corresponding right—an obligation on my part to forgive the offender, while it were a contradiction in terms to say of him that he hath a right to be forgiven. The distinction is quite familiar to ethical writers; and they have had recourse to a peculiar nomenclature for the expression of it. In the one case, as with the virtues of truth and justice, where there is both a duty on the one side and a counterpart right upon the other, they are termed virtues of perfect obligation. In the other case, as with benevolence, whether in the form of mercy or hospitality or almsgiving, or a kindness and courtesy beyond the general habits or expectations of any given neighbourhood—these, though all of them virtues in themselves which serve to grace and exalt the giver, yet for which no right or claim can be alleged by the receiver—these are but the virtues of imperfect obligation.

This leads us to observe, that there are two distinct regimens, and both on the side of morality. There is the regimen of fear, and the regimen of conscience. Each might be brought to bear upon man at the same time, when the duty to be performed is one of perfect obligation—which it is not only right for every moral agent to observe, but in which also there is, counterpart to this, the holder of a right, who might, by legal enforcement, compel the observance of it, whether it be for the payment of a debt or the fulfilment of a promise. On the side then of one and the same virtue, there might both be the coarser regimen of fear, and the finer regimen of conscience—the one put into operation by a government within the breast, which tells of the right and the wrong, and, by the force of principle alone persuades to the former, and restrains from the latter—the other put into operation by the government of a country which institutes a law, and ordains its penalties against all the aggressions of injustice. One could imagine a virtuous society where conscience was omnipotent and universal—in virtue of which the government of principle might have perfect and unlimited sway, and so the government of law might be dispensed with. And there are many individuals whose honour and integrity are full guarantees for their punctual discharge of all the equities of social life; and of whom therefore it may be said that the law is not needed for such righteous persons—of which indeed they often give proof, by the admirable way in which they acquit themselves also of the generosities of social life—those virtues of imperfect obligation, wherewith the law of the heart alone hath to do, and the law of the state or of the statute-book has, or ought to have no concern. But though the law of conscience be sufficient for these, it needs—in the actual state or character of humanity, and for the effectual regulation of the commonwealth at large—to be supplemented by the civil and criminal laws of the country. And accordingly both influences may tell at once on the same individual. Both considerations are pressed by the apostle upon his converts—and this by the way proves that the distinction on which we insist is not a vain one—when he says, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."

It is well that you should keep hold of this distinction between a lower and a higher regimen—the regimen of fear and the regimen of conscience—as it might prepare you for understanding another regimen, higher even than that of conscience; and lead you along to another distinction—we mean the distinction that we now announce between the regimen of conscience and the regimen of love. In every exercise of the conscience, there seems a balancing between the right and the wrong—a comparison of opposites, grounded on the knowledge both of good and evil, whereupon, in virtue of its sense of rectitude, it enjoins a preference for the one, and an avoidance of the other. Now this work of comparison on the part of a moral agent might, as unnecessary, be dispensed with—if in doing what is right he always did that which he liked best; or, in other words, if the taste and affections did of themselves prompt, and at all times, that very conduct, which, had the arbitration of conscience been required, it would have pronounced to be our righteous and incumbent obligation. It might seem hard to say that conscience in this case would be superseded—yet there is a certain sense in which it would be true—for it is obvious enough, that if we abandoned ourselves to our own heart's desire, and that desire was ever, spontaneously and of its own full accord, on the side of that which is most righteous and best, the office of conscience, at least for the purposes of guidance or regulation, would then be uncalled for. And however difficult it might be to say that love would supersede conscience, we need go no farther than to our text for decisive instances of love superseding the commandment. For certain it is, that if we thoroughly loved a neighbour, loved him as we do ourselves, we could no more inflict pain or violence upon him than upon our own persons—no more rob him of his property than cast our own into the fire—no more deceive him by falsehood than willingly give ourselves up to the wiles of an impostor—no more wish any desirable thing of his to be ours, than we should aught of ours to be either abstracted or destroyed. To a man thus actuated, the prohibitions of 'kill not,' and 'steal not,' and 'lie not,' and 'covet not,' were altogether superfluous — nor would his conscience need at all to ruminate on the rightfulness, either in respect of matter or authority, of any of these commandments. What under the regimen of conscience would be a thing of obedience—the very same, under the regimen of love, would be a thing of inclination. Love would be an equivalent, nay a greatly overpassing substitute for law. Under its simple and spontaneous impulse, there could be the working of no ill. Of itself it would do the work of all the commandments. Where such an enlargement takes place upon the character of man, the will might with all safety be left to take the place of conscience. The law of God would be his delight; nor could there be any hazard of disobedience at the hands of him, the delight of whose heart lay in the fulfilling of the law.

Now the question comes to be, Which is the higher moral state—that of him who loves his neighbour as himself, and in virtue of this affection would abstain from doing him any evil; or of him who, without this affection, but in virtue of the commandments, and under a sense not only of their authority, but their rightness, would alike abstain from doing him any evil? Were it because of their authority alone, then the obedience might proceed from an apprehension of the threatened penalties, or be a forced obedience under the regimen of fear. Were it because of their rightness, then would it be a higher, for now a duteous obedience, under the regimen of conscience. But what we ask is, Whether, when he loves his neighbour as himself, not because he thinks of the commandments, but because he realizes the saying in which they are briefly comprehended—whether, when it is because of this that he kills not and steals not and lies not and covets not—whether it be not a still higher, being now a willing obedience under the regimen of love? When he has gotten so far as that love supersedes law, has he not reached a higher stage in this moral progression from one degree of excellence to another?—and were this consideration thoroughly pondered and pursued into all its consequences, might it not serve to elucidate an else mysterious passage of the Bible, where we read that the law was not made for a righteous person—for a person thus far refined and exalted in his principles and feelings, but for those in the ruder, or more rudimental and initiatory stages of their moral discipline; and who, for the restraint or regulation of their conduct, needed that the coarser appliances of law—its obligations, or even its terrors—should be brought to bear upon them? It is thus we might understand the apostolic averment—"That the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for men-stealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." To this purpose serveth the law. "It was added because of transgressions." Every commandment in the decalogue, with the exception of the fifth—for we do not except the fourth, which tells us *not* to work upon the Sabbath—is of a negative or prohibitory, rather than of a prescriptive character. It tells us not of the things which we are to do, but of the things which we are not to do; and most certainly they are such things, that if the moral dynamics of love to God and love to man had full operation in our heart, we should have no wish for the doing of them.

And yet, as already hinted, we should feel it a hard and difficult thing to say that love might supersede conscience; and so as that the element of moral rightness, or the consideration of what we ought or of what we owe, might never be present to the mind, merely because there reigned an affection there which formed a sufficient and a practical security for the observance of them. We apprehend that if destitute of the conception or knowledge of the moral character of actions, as right or wrong, we should want an essential feature of that resemblance to the Godhead, the restoration whereof is one great object of the economy under which we sit*—even His admiration of the one and His abhorrence of the other, so that like Him we may love righteousness and hate iniquity. It is true that Adam was interdicted in paradise from the tree of knowledge of good and evil—and therefore that, apart from this knowledge and by the spontaneous tendencies of his own perfect nature, he may have been kept close to the one and altogether clear of the other. But instead of this there was one commandment laid upon him—and by the way a negative one, or not a bidding but a forbidding—even that he should *not* eat of this tree. It was on his transgression thereof that his eyes were opened; and his conscience, we have no doubt—his sense of good and evil, and of

* Col. iii. 10.

the difference between them, would then come into vigorous play. But we must not therefore imagine that in the process of man's regeneration this sense of good and evil behoves to be extinguished. He will be "renewed in knowledge;" and though heaven be that holy place into which sin doth not enter, yet that the knowledge or conception of sin will be there is evident from this, that holiness will be there; and what is holiness but the fearful and determined recoil of perfect moral excellence from all that is opposite to itself?—a property of such high estimation, that some would vindicate the origin of evil on the principle that it afforded a scope for the display and the exercise of holiness. However this may be, certain it is that the love or charity of heaven will not supersede there the conscience or moral sense, which takes cognisance both of the good and the evil, as manifested both by the song of the redeemed to Him who washed them in His blood, and by their intelligent ascriptions to Him who sitteth on the throne, of Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty; and, Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.

At all events, there seems to be a progression, an ascent by successive stages from a lower to a higher discipline, in the moral education and moral history of our species—whether we comprehend or not the various footsteps of it—as when the spirit of bondage gives way to the spirit of adoption, or the oldness of the letter to the newness of the spirit; or as when the terrors of the law are succeeded by a delight in the law; or as when the commandment, formerly graven on tables of stone, comes to be graven on the fleshly tables of the heart; or as when the law fulfils but the office of a preparatory schoolmaster for bringing men to Christ, or guiding them onward to the higher lessons of the gospel; or finally, as when the supremacy of law makes place for the supremacy of love, even of the charity which never faileth, but abideth and reigneth everlastingly in heaven, after that the means and the preparatives for this great consummation have all vanished away.

> "I'm apt to think the man
> That could surround the sum of things, and spy
> The heart of God, and secrets of His empire,
> Would speak but love; with him the bright result
> Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
> And make one thing of all theology."

LECTURE XCIV.

ROMANS XIII. 11-14.

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Ver. 11.—'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Some commentators would refer the nearer salvation of which the apostle here speaks, to the destruction of Jerusalem, as standing somehow or other connected with a great enlargement to the professors of Christianity. Others again would refer it to the expected second coming of our Lord—in which it is thought that even apostles were not yet so far instructed or inspired, as to be free from the then prevalent imagination that He would shortly revisit the world—nay make His appearance before the present generation had passed away. Without deciding on either of these interpretations, we hold it a sounder, or at least a safer application of the advice here given, to understand the nearer salvation of every disciple as signifying the greater nearness of his death—seeing of that event, that it is indeed a great salvation to all who fall asleep in Jesus, for with them to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. When the verse is thus apprehended, it becomes a great and universal lesson for Christians of all ages, which carries its own obvious recommendation along with it; and is in harmony with many similar injunctions delivered in other places of Scripture—as, Brethren, the time is short, and let us not therefore abuse the world; or, Let us work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.

'And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.' The clause of 'knowing the time,' seems to strengthen one or other of the more special interpretations of this verse—as referring to the knowledge of a something which the Christians of that period had been made to see in the light of prophecy or inspiration, whether the rightly anticipated destruction of Jerusalem or the then misunderstood reappearance of our Saviour. We however shall still keep by the more general meaning that we have already assigned to this verse—understanding it thus, that it is now high time to bestir ourselves, and make diligent preparation for that blissful eternity which is so fast approaching; for that this is the great work to be done, and there remains but little, yea a rapidly lessening time for the doing of it.

But how comes it that Christians should be called upon to awake out of sleep? Are they not already awakened? Did they not at the first outset of their discipleship yield obedience to the apostolic call of "Awake, O sinner, and Christ shall give thee light?" Has not every believer already passed out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel; and why then should he be so urged, as if he had yet to shake himself from the sleep of carnality or spiritual death, or to arouse him out of the lethargy of nature?

It is because of the constant and cleaving earthliness which continues to subsist even after regeneration; and which, though weakened and under process of extinction, is not wholly exterminated while we remain in the body—it is because of this that we need to be reminded even of the incipient calls, and that we need to be put on the incipient duties of the Christian life. Thus it is that to be kept from lapsing into unbelief, we must hold fast the beginning of our confidence; and lest our love should wax cold, we must remember the strength of it at the outset of our discipleship. In a word, we must be ever recurring to the exercises of our first faith, our first love, our first obedience; and more especially should awaken out of sleep, or keep awake, amid the opiates of sense and of a deceitful world.

Thus understood, it is the charge of the apostle, that we should open our eyes to the realities of that unseen world to which we every day are coming nearer. What he teaches in this verse is the wisdom of considering our latter end, to which we are hastening onward. In order to meet the salvation which then awaits us, our distinct aim should be to perfect our holiness; or to give all diligence that we may be found without spot and blameless; or so to run as to reach the prize of our high calling, and be presented faultless before the presence of God. The salvation here spoken of is the salvation that we are called upon to work out—a task from which we are not the less exempted, though it be said that God works in us.* We are justified on the moment of our believing; but our sanctification is the business of a lifetime. For there is a life of faith as well as a birth of faith;† and it should be our care that ere this life is finished ‡ its object should be fulfilled—which is, that we stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God.

Ver. 12.—'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.' The imagery of this verse requires the same explanation as did that of the preceding. It is true that the proper night of the soul—the moral night—is anterior to conversion; and that when this event takes place, the soul passes out of darkness into marvellous light. And accordingly the true disciples of the Lord Jesus are said to be no longer the children of night, but the children of light and of the day. Still it is true, that so long as we abide in this world ours is but a state of comparative light—for here, though we see, it is but through a glass, darkly; and that it is only in the next world where we shall live in the full light of the risen day, where we shall know even as we are known. The soul of a saint on earth, still in twilight obscurity, has not yet made its conclusive escape from the region of darkness; and not till ushered into heaven, or among the cloudless transparencies of the upper sanctuary, will it in God's light clearly see light. Such then is the night, and such the day spoken of in our text; and it is because this night is far spent, and this day is at hand, that we are called on to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light.

There are works of darkness which shun the light of day, or would shrink from exposure, even in this world—such as the deeds either of shameful dishonesty or of shameful licentiousness. There are other works again, which, though alike condemned in the eye of heaven, we should not here on earth call works of darkness—such as the overt acts which transgress no social law, yet bespeak a heart of deep irreligion, and utterly devoid of all sensibility to the sacredness or authority of God's spiritual law—as when His Sabbaths are secularized in convivial parties; or when, in the intent prosecution, whether of the amusements or the business of life, decisive manifestation is given forth of a preference for the creature over the Creator, for the things and interests of time over the things and interests of eternity. These last, as being the mere fruits of nature's carnality, and springing universally forth of the habits and affections of natural men, we should not call works of darkness—for they are exhibited daily and without a blush in the face of society—not however because not utterly worthless in themselves, but because done before the eye of spectators who have no perception of their deformity, done on the theatre of a world which has been rightly denominated the land of spiritual blindness and spiritual death. But if seen in the light of the divine law, and placed before the rebuke of the divine countenance, they will then be recognised as works of darkness, and ranked as they ought with the worst atrocities of human wickedness. And accordingly on the great day of manifestation, and when the principles of a higher jurisprudence are brought to bear on the characters of men, many, the most esteemed and honourable among their fellows, will awake to shame and everlasting contempt. Ungodliness will then appear in its true estimate, as the great master-sin—being indeed the seminal principle of all misrule and anarchy in creation; and therefore to be exiled and put forth into everlasting darkness, as a thing unfit to be seen on the open panorama of a harmonious and well-ordered universe.

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* Phil. ii. 12, 13. † Gal. ii. 20. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

Yet it might subserve a practical object, to view apart from each other those grosser offences which are usually stigmatized as works of darkness; and those more subtle delinquencies of the heart and spirit, which are universal as the species, and none therefore are at pains to conceal, because none are ashamed of them. It might also help to distinguish between the incipient and advanced duties of the Christian life. At the very outset, nay anterior to their conversion, though with a view to it, nay in the aim of carrying it or bringing it to pass, we should call on all men to abandon their drunkennesses and dishonesties and impurities, or what themselves would all understand and admit to be works of darkness. This is a voice which should be distinctly and audibly given forth at the first call of the gospel, or first sound of the trumpet which it lifts in the hearing of all men. It is a work often done in fact at the bidding of natural conscience, or on the still lower impulses of prudence and calculation—as when, to use a familiar phrase, the profligate, making a pause in his career, turns over a new leaf, or becomes, in the worldly sense of the term, a reformed man. Such a reformation is often achieved without Christianity; but on the other hand, there can be no Christianity without such a reformation. And it is a reformation which should be peremptorily demanded of all inquirers at their very entrance on the way of life—as being an indispensable part, or even preliminary, of that movement by which men pass out of darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel—else they are not framing their doings to turn unto God (Hos. v. 4). They are not turning unto Christ, if they are not turning from their iniquities (Acts iii. 26). It is thus that the moral character of gospel teaching should be vindicated and made palpable in the eyes of all men; and so as that they might recognise it to be something more than what they often apprehend it to be—the mere teaching of a cabalistic orthodoxy. Instead of which it is pre-eminently a practical system—striking at once at the evil habits, while its higher aim is to regenerate the evil hearts of men—so that in commanding them everywhere to repent and turn unto God, it charges them, at the first and earliest outset of their religious earnestness, to do works meet for repentance (Acts xxvi. 20).

But there are other and higher graces more distinctive of Christianity, and serving more specifically to signalize and separate the children of light from the children of this world; and which are altogether beyond the reach of unaided nature. There are certain things which nature, by the sheer force of her own resolute and sustained purposes, might be able to cast off; but there are certain other things which nature in her own strength cannot possibly put on. She may of herself cast off many of the works of darkness; but of herself she cannot put on the graces and virtues which serve more specially to characterize and adorn the children of light. Thus to array herself, she needs other instruments than those which natively and originally belong to her—an instrumentality which is here significantly termed 'the armour of light,' because in the utter inadequacy of those implements or faculties which we ourselves possess, we require the use of other tools, other instruments of action than those, that we may have power to walk as children of light and of the day; or, which is tantamount to this, that we may have power to become the children of God (John i. 12).

Still to cast off the works of darkness is to throw aside a great obstruction, which, if suffered to remain, would prove a fatal impediment to the access of all spiritual and saving light into our minds. It may be nothing more than a mere shaking of the dead bones, ere the spirit of life is blown into us—that mere awakening of the sinner, which is previous or preparatory to the act of Christ giving him light (Eph. v. 11-14). It is an essential step, however, in the process of our regeneration. There is a something to cast off, as well as to put on. To the former, we should give our immediate hand. To the latter, we should give our immediate and earnest heed. And it may perhaps help to elucidate the singular expression, 'armour of light'—if we attend to the manner in which, under the economy of the gospel, the power of a believer to serve the Lord Christ is made to stand allied with his perception of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is, in fact, in the right views of his understanding that his great strength for obedience lies. And accordingly we read of his being sanctified by faith, of his being renewed in knowledge, of his receiving power to become a son of God on the moment of his believing in the name of Christ. But our best explanation of the armour of light, which in the verse before us we are called to put on—is perhaps to be had in Paul's description of the armour of God, which in his Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians we are also called to put on; and where we learn that the main furniture of a disciple, and by which he is equipped for the work and warfare of Christianity, lies in such acts and acquisitions as are altogether mental, nay chiefly intellectual—as having our loins girt about with truth, and our taking the shield of faith, and our putting on for a helmet the hope of salvation, and our having a constant respect unto the word, with prayer for the Spirit, that in the clear element of His manifestations we might be enabled rightly to discern and to make the right application of it—to which word therefore, we, in the language of Peter, should give earnest heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts.

Before quitting this verse, it is well to remark, that as even the most advanced Christians are required to be constantly holding by and keeping in exercise their first faith—so there is a call upon them too to be ever practising at their first obedience. For they too are still beset with their old tempations—insomuch that if not vigilant and jealous of themselves—they may be precipitated back again into the most enormous and disgraceful works of darkness. The injunction therefore to cast off these is not yet superfluous, although Paul here addresses himself to men who had long embraced the truth and had long walked in it.

There is room for the utmost strenuousness even to the end of our days—lest we should fall short of heaven; or, at all events, lest we should fall short of that rank in its blessedness and glory which we might have otherwise attained. Nay there is a most grievous misunderstanding of the gospel, if we be not as diligent and watchful and painstaking, as if overhung by the risk or the possibility of losing heaven altogether. There was nothing in the orthodoxy of Paul that relaxed his self-discipline, and this too under the apprehension lest he himself should turn out to be a castaway. With these views we can imagine nothing more urgent or impressive than the consideration in our text, that the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. In particular, it should tell most emphatically on those who have now entered the vale of years, and may now regard themselves as walking on the shores or along the brink of eternity. And if the righteous scarcely be saved—where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?—an appalling thought truly, and most of all to such as him of whom Hosea speaks (vii. 9, 10)—"Yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not:" "And they do not return to the Lord, nor seek him for all this." These premonitory symptoms of a dissolution, and so of a reckoning at hand, fail to alarm them; and so they go on in nature's torpid infatuation, when they should be lifting this fearful cry—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

Ver. 13.—'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.' The term 'honest' is now of different meaning from what it was at the time that our translation was executed. It then signified that which is seemly, decent, reputable. It bore an especial regard to the aspect of our doings, and so we are called on to provide things honest in the *sight* of men. It is according to this, the proper and original sense of the word, that we are here bidden to walk honestly *as in the day*—that is, so as that our whole conduct shall bear exposure, and be sustained as respectable and right, though lying patent to the observation of all our fellows in society. There was a mighty stress laid by our apostle on appearance—on the creditable bearing of his disciples—on their character, not absolutely and in itself only, but on their character in the eyes of the world—insomuch that, all sensitive and alive to the honour of his Master's cause, he wept over those professors who gloried in their shame, and through whom the way of truth was evil spoken of. It was obviously not as an end but as a means, that he so valued the good report of his converts—even that their light might shine before men, and men might of consequence be won to the gospel by their conversation. Thus also Peter, in warning his converts against fleshly lusts, adds—"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. ii. 12).

It is with this view that he first warns them against those vices which most shun the light, and are peculiarly unfit for exhibition in the face of others—the vices of low and loathsome dissipation—drunkenness and impurity—of so offensive a description, that it was held a sore aggravation of their wickedness who practised them, if they counted it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. They are vices of inherent turpitude in themselves; but it evinces a higher degree of moral hardihood, when it was a turpitude in which men could glory—and highest of all, in an ostensible disciple of the Lord Jesus, who could thus bring disparagement and disgrace on that sacred cause which he was bound by every tie of gratitude and sincerity to adorn.

It is not, however, the object of Christianity to conceal vice, but to exterminate it—not to give its disciples the face and appearance only of virtue, but to give them virtue in substance and reality—and so as that they shall glorify the Lord with their soul and spirit, as well as with their bodies. And it is worthy of remark, that, for the achievement of this great moral change, it proceeds—not in the style of an ascetic—that is, not in the way of excision, but in the way of substitution—or, in other words, when it calls for the sacrifice or the expulsion of one affection, it is by replacing it with another—and not by an act of simple dispossession, leaving the heart in a state of desolation and dreariness. Even the disposition to mirth it does not propose to extinguish, but rather provides with the outgoing of a kindred exercise—Is any merry? let him sing psalms, making melody in his heart unto the Lord. We can fancy it to be another exemplification of the same design, another specimen of the same reigning character—that when it charges the disciples not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, it follows up the admonition, by telling them to be filled with the Spirit; and so to exchange the maddening influence of a mere animal excitement for another influence, glorious, and elevating too, and fitted, though in a higher and holier way, to transport the soul above the cares of a present sordid and earthly existence. And as this holds true of the rioting and drunkenness, it holds alike true of the habits or practices which are specified immediately after—a thought suggested to us by the proximity of the advice given a few verses before, where the apostle subordinates all virtue to the law of love, and would supplant all vice by the same law. And certainly there is a high and holy and heavenly affection of love, which, if present and predominant within us, would most effectually overrule, if not eradicate those evil affections which war against the soul. The love of the Father is directly and specifically opposite, we are told by the apostle, to the lust of the flesh (1 John ii. 15, 16). So that, if the love of God were but admitted into the bosom, and had ascendency there, it would not only cast out fear (1 John iv. 18), but would cast out, or at least keep down lust also. When called to abandon lust, it is by means of the sweetest and softest affection of which nature is susceptible—and that affection directed too to the best and the noblest of all objects. Did we love God with all our heart, there would be no room in it for those base and foul and unhallowed imaginations, which in the expressive language of the prophet, turn it into a cage of unclean birds. Under such a regimen, instead of being scared from the indulgences of nature as by the scowl of an anchoret, we are gently yet irresistibly weaned from them as by the mild persuasions of a friend; and we feel it to be in beautiful accordance with this, that the apostolic dissuasives against licentiousness are so often couched in terms of so much endearment and tenderness:—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. But fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you." "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. . . . When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory—mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth."

He concludes his enumeration of those works which are unfit for the light of the day, with strife and envying—which in another place he ranks among the works of the flesh (Gal. v. 20, 21). They belong to the malignant, and not as the former to the licentious vices of our nature—but like these too are of such a character, as to shun the observation of general society. This holds especially true of envy, of which all men dislike the exhibition; and which therefore is left to eat inwardly on him who is actuated thereby, because ashamed of showing it. Even strife, when it breaks forth in outrageous expressions, soon becomes too much for the sympathy of our fellows, and so restrains at least its utterance, or its deeds of open retaliation, for the sake of decorum. There is a grossness in resentment, as well as a grossness in impurity—both of which require to have a veil thrown over them, even from this world's toleration; so that over and above the spiritual propriety of denouncing and denominating all sins as works of darkness, there is a natural or social propriety in affixing this denomination to the latter as well as the former of the sins enumerated in our text.

Ver. 14.—'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.'—'But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.' This figurative expression is more readily conceived by us as bearing application to the imputed righteousness of Christ, than to the graces of His example. That everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in, is viewed by us under the image of a garment wherein we are invited to appear before God, clothed upon as it were or invested with an order of merit, won not by ourselves but by the Captain of our salvation; and because of which God looks upon us, not in our own characters, but in the face of His anointed. There is undoubted truth in all this—yet it hinders not the application of the very same phrase, the putting on of Christ, to the adornment of our persons with those identical virtues which made Him to be chief among the sons of men, and altogether lovely. Such a representation, besides that it is correct doctrinally, harmonizes with the scriptural expression of it—as when called to put on the new man, to put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. And thus too, "Be clothed with humility."

We confess our exceeding value for that view which puts our sanctification on the same footing with our justification, in that it subordinates both to our faith in Christ. We feel it to be a truth inestimably precious, that our personal holiness is a thing received by us, and from the hands or at the giving of another—just as is our judicial acceptance. It would mightily speed onwards our practical Christianity, did we habitually look unto Jesus as the Lord our strength as well as the Lord our righteousness. The greatest lesson we have to learn in the school of preparation for heaven is the efficacy of believing prayer for grace to help us in every time of need—that we might not only have His propitiation to shield us, but His power to rest upon us. Then should we know what it is to strive mightily according to the grace of God working in us mightily. The mystery would come to be resolved, because then experimentally realized, of the utmost diligence in performance along with the utmost dependence in prayer—a happy and fruitful combination, mysterious to the general world, but not to the fellow-workers with God, because by them exemplified and carried into effect. The active and the passive of this conjunct operation work most prosperously into each other's hands; and the experience of the apostle, who when he was weak yet was he strong, reflects while it explains the beautiful saying of the prophet—that in quietness and in confidence ye shall have strength. A reposing confidence in Christ gives efficacy to prayer; and by the gratitude which it awakens gives impulse to all the springs of obedience. Creature perfection, says old Riccalton, lies in the habit of bringing our own emptiness to the fulness that is in Christ Jesus.

'And make not provision (*πϱονοια*) for the flesh.' 'Provision.' The word implies a forecasting of the mind; and the prohibition therefore is against all deliberation or devising of means or expedients for the gratification of our lusts. These base affections of our nature may be excited even involuntarily on the sudden suggestion or unforeseen presentation of the objects which awaken them. Even then it is our duty to shun these objects, to turn our sight and our thoughts from vanity, and so to flee the lusts which war against the soul. But a far greater depravity than thus to feel them is it to go forth upon them. One should be ever on the watch lest he be surprised into temptation; but it evinces a greater height and hardihood of profligacy to seek after it, and when, so far from a defensive vigilance against the inroad of evil desires, there is an aggressive vigilance in quest of methods or opportunities for their indulgence. He is a confirmed and advanced learner in the school of wickedness who can thus in his cooler moments bestow care and calculation on such an enterprise, and in short make a study of the likeliest methods for securing to himself the enjoyment of unhallowed pleasures; and this is the *pronoia*, the unholy *providence*, if it may be so termed, on which our text lays its interdict.

But it is not against all *pronoia*, all respect to things future, even though the futurities of this life, that the Bible warns us. Some might think so, because of such texts as—"Take no thought for your life." "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?" "Take no thought for the morrow" (Matt. vi. 25, 31, 34). Take no thought (*μεριμνα*). Not *pronoia*, but *merimna*—which latter word does not properly mean thought, but anxious thought; and is accordingly better translated so in the following places. "But I would have you without *carefulness*" (1 Cor. vii. 32)—not without thought, but without carefulness. And the same word is also thus rendered in Phil. iv. 6 —"Be careful for nothing." We are not therefore to imagine, that because told not to be careful or not to be thoughtful for to-morrow, we must take no thought of to-morrow at all. True, it were highly criminal to make provision for to-morrow's lusts; but it is not on that account unlawful to make provision for to-morrow's necessities. Nay, there is another part of the Bible in which we are told that it were highly criminal not to make such provision. The *pronoia* of our text were criminal, but not the *pronoia* (the word there too) of the following verse—"But if any *provide* not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8). We should not have adverted thus minutely to the original Greek, or introduced it at all into a popular exposition of Scripture—had not our quotation from Matthew been one of those very few passages in holy writ where the emendation of our present version is of any real popular or practical importance.

'To *fulfil* the lusts thereof.' Although there is no word for *fulfil* in the original, it being supplied by the translators—yet, as it is rightly supplied, we might here remark on the difference between the feeling of a lust and the fulfilment thereof. To feel a lust implies the presence of sin in us. To fulfil a lust implies the power of sin over us. The one is the sad evidence that sin still dwells in our mortal bodies; the other is the far sadder evidence that sin has still the dominion over them. When made, not of our own seeking but by surprise, to feel an evil desire, it is our part to flee from it. But greatly worse than to feel is to follow it; and worst of all is to provide for it.

LECTURE XCV.

ROMANS XIV. 1-16.

"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of."

THE Church at Rome was made up partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles; and one great and obvious design of this epistle, as might be seen in various passages from the beginning to the end of it, was to reconcile them so far as that they should be brought to one mind—if not in all matters of opinion, at least in mutual affection, which, when there happen to be diversities of sentiment or practice, cannot possibly be sustained without mutual forbearance. Their common faith, while implying a full agreement in certain great and essential principles, did not supersede the diversities here spoken of; and the object of Paul was not that in these they should cease to differ, but that in these they should agree to differ. He did not vainly attempt by a stern decree of uniformity to harmonize their understandings so as that they should think alike; but he did attempt, by the mild persuasives of gospel charity, the far likelier fulfilment of harmonizing their spirits so as that they should feel alike in their love and benignant toleration of each other. Paul was pre-eminently and characteristically a peace-maker—up to the limit within which peace was at all practicable, or in as far as the high demands of principle and purity would allow—for beyond that limit none more unyielding and none more uncompromising than he. It was only as far as lay in him, or as far as it was possible, that he lived peaceably himself, or would recommend others to live peaceably with all men. He was first pure; and it was after he had provided for this high interest—it was then that he was peaceable.

This beautiful combination, this blending together of truth and charity, is more fully and intimately seen by us as we pass in detail over the successive verses of this truly catholic and enlightened chapter.

Ver. 1, 2.—'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.' Who is meant by him that is weak in the faith we learn from the second verse, where we are told that the weak man was he who ate herbs—leaving us to infer, of course, that the strong man was he who believed that he might eat all things. He who was strong in the faith that Christ had fulfilled for him all righteousness, and left him nothing but the law of love, would, in very proportion to the force of this conviction, feel exempted from the scrupulosities of a mere formal or external observation; and not only assert, without compunction or fear, but also live in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free. It was easier, however, for the Gentile to do this than for the Jew, who had to overcome the prejudices of his early education, and make a conquest over his yet lingering sensibilities on the side of what he had been taught to look upon as right and religious in other days. For the genuine exhibition then of a strong and enlightened conscience, we should look not so much to the Gentile converts as to those Jewish disciples who did not judaize. And to them too should we look for greater tenderness towards those more sensitive of their brethren, who felt themselves not able to surmount the native partialities wherewith the recollections of their birth and of their hereditary worship had inspired them. They would all the more readily sympathize with feelings in which they themselves had shared—though with a struggle they had got the better of them. They could make greater allowance for these their brethren in the flesh than could others; and this is not the only example of first-rate men, the highest in strength and intellect, being at the same time the most generous in their indulgence to the infirmities of others. Paul, himself a converted Jew, and who now regarded as superstitious that which he formerly held as most bindingly and inviolably sacred—nobly interposes to throw the shield of his protection over those kinsmen and countrymen of his who had embraced the gospel, yet could not altogether and conclusively quit the dear associations which had begun with their infancy, and were strengthened along the successive stages of youth and manhood, till they had become babes in Christ, and continued babes or were still in the childhood of their Christianity, at the time when his epistle to the Romans was penned. We conceive that they would be chiefly the Gentiles who despised such. Paul, and those of the Jews who like him had had experience of the trial, would, we imagine, with a fellow-feeling for the doubts and difficulties which themselves had mastered, view their weaker, but still their conscientious brethren, with respect and tenderness.

Accordingly in arbitrating between the weak and the strong, it is on the side of the weak that his first apostolic deliverance is given. He bids them be received, but not to doubtful disputations—to be recognised on the footing of their common brotherhood in all the great and essential principles of Christianity; but not to be harassed with contentious argumentation about those matters of indifferency, which, with their yet abiding prejudices, were not of indifferency to them. If they had not the understanding to be convinced of the nullity, because now the expiration, of the Mosaic ceremonial—or at least if they could not attain such a strength of conviction as to displace their feelings on the side of certain Hebrew observances to which they still so fondly and tenaciously clung, it was not the part of their brethren to overbear these feelings, or even to annoy them with vexatious controversies, at once endless and unfruitful. These are what the apostle in his other writings characterizes as vain janglings, and foolish questions, and contentions, and strivings about the law, which were unprofitable and vain. What he inculcates, instead of these, is a discreet silence, and meanwhile a respectful toleration—in the confidence, we have no doubt, that, with mild and patient forbearance, all would come right at the last. He felt as if the important gospel truths which they laid hold of, would, by their own direct influence, dispossess the mind of all its Jewish absurdities and trifles. Seeing that at least the foundation on which they rested was sound, he trusted that the wood and hay and stubble would at length be consumed.* This is in perfect keeping with his treatment of the disciples in other instances. They agreed in all that was essential, else they could be no disciples of his; but they did not therefore agree in all things. He knew, however, that they were in the faith, and so under the teaching of the Spirit; and he trusted more to this than to the efficacy of any disputatious argument. And accordingly, instead of attempting to force them all prematurely into one way of thinking, he, on certain matters of inferior moment, left them very much to themselves, as he did those Philippians who were not yet perfect in all their views —telling them, "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Meanwhile he was satisfied if, with all their differences and shortcomings in things of lesser consideration, his own paramount charity took but possession of them. "Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." This was admirable and exquisitely good management—the same indeed with that of our Saviour, who refrained from putting new wine into old bottles; and instead of dogmatizing His apostles either into truths or observances which they were not yet prepared for, spake to them only as they were able to bear it. It was in this spirit that Paul treated his Jewish converts; and he wished all who were alike enlightened with himself to treat them in the same way.

There are other general lessons enveloped in this passage; but before expatiating any further on these, let me prosecute a little longer our examination of particular verses.

Ver. 3, 4.—'Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.' The apostle, in his even-handed manner, deals alike with both parties. After having told the strong that they should not despise the weak, he tells the weak that they should not condemn the strong. Let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth. In the state of his conscience it were a profane thing in him to eat—for this would be to eat what he still thought was forbidden. But let him not judge others who do not think in the same way. Let him not look upon them as profane persons, though they should eat what he would religiously recoil from. God hath received or taken them into acceptance. It is likely that they had some palpable evidence of this acceptance in the visible and extraordinary gifts of that period—conferred on some of those who, in the full use of their Christian liberty, looked on all meats as alike: and so they might make out the same conclusion for themselves that Peter did respecting the Gentiles of the household of Cornelius, after that they had received the Holy Ghost. Have a care then, lest in refusing fellowship with these, you withstand or contravene the judgment of God. It is not improbable that these extraordinary gifts were shared alike by both parties—a lesson therefore to both, of mutual respect and toleration. At all events, they had the express authority of the apostle, who in the first verse bade the strong receive the weak; and in the third verse tells the weak that God had received the strong. And it is thus that he would guard the one party against contempt of their fellows, and the other against censoriousness.

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* 1 Cor. iii. 11-15.

Ver. 5, 6.—'One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.' The same lesson is extended to days, respecting the observance of which there obtained a like diversity of sentiment. The apostle brings the same enlarged and enlightened casuistry to bear on both.* He wished each man to act in conformity with his own persuasion, whatever that persuasion might be—only he wished each man to be fully persuaded in his own mind. He did not care so much about what the persuasion specially was in such matters, as that the conduct should be agreeable thereto. He therefore forbare himself, and would have his disciples also to forbear, from all argumentation between the right and the wrong persuasion in these matters; but held it imperative that as the persuasion, which he wished to be as thorough and decided as possible, so ought in all consistency the performance to be. The persuasion might be wrong, but this were only an obliquity of intellect. But if the performance were not as the persuasion, this were far more grievous—a moral obliquity—sin against the light of a man's own conscience—the dereliction of what he thought to be his duty towards God. To think in one way of God's will and act in another, were to renounce the authority of His will—an abjuration of the principle of living unto God—whereas men might think diversely of that will, and yet the will of God be alike respected; or the principle of living unto Him be alike retained and alike proceeded on by all. Paul generously grants the benefit of this fair and liberal allowance to both parties in this controversy, whether of meats or of days. The Lord may be alike the object of regard with him who observes the day and with him who observes it not—or with him who eateth and him who eateth not. In the hearts of both these His supremacy may be alike felt and recognised; and there may be a like devotedness to His service in the lives of both.

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* For our views in greater fulness on the casuistry of meats and days, and certain other cognate questions—see seven sermons, from the xii. to the xviii. of the second volume of our 'Congregational Sermons.'

Ver. 7, 8.—'For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' Paul, as his manner is, stops at the passing suggestion which had occurred in the course of his argument—to render homage by the way, as it were, to the principle which it embodied. That principle is the entire surrender of the creature, in all his desires and doings, to the Creator, who gave him birth. It is our part to make ourselves wholly over unto God. All true Christians, whether the observer or not of meats and days, are alike in this, and cannot possibly be otherwise without the forfeiture of their discipleship. Each real convert liveth unto God, and not unto himself; and each man dieth unto God, and not unto himself. We think that there is a difference between these two clauses, which, however minute in expression, is worthy, in respect of substance and meaning, to have perhaps a greater stress laid upon it than is usually done. It is 'none of us' who liveth to himself; but it is 'no man' who dieth to himself. None of *us*, none of the household of faith, no real Christian, but who liveth unto God and not unto himself—for at the commencement of his new life he made a voluntary dedication of himself unto

God; and the constant, while throughout the voluntary habit of this life, is to yield himself up in all things unto the will of God, and not unto his own will. Whereas universally no man dieth unto himself;—when he dies it is not by a voluntary act of his own, but at the decree of God, to whose absolute disposal of him, whether at death or after it, he must helplessly and passively give himself over. When it comes to this, then is it true of every man without exception, that he can have no choice, but is wholly in the hands of God—if not a Christian, to be judged and consigned by Him as a vessel of wrath to the place of everlasting condemnation; and if a Christian, to be judged by Him, but that in order to his preferment as a vessel of mercy in the realms of everlasting blessedness and glory. It is only however, the dying of the Christian that is of a piece with his living. If with him to live is Christ, with him also to die is gain, or Christ still, whom to win he counts all things but loss. It is he and he only who both lives unto the Lord and dies unto the Lord—so that whether he live or die, he is the Lord's—it being his great aim, and that of all genuine disciples, so to labour, that whether present or absent, whether living or dead, they may be accepted of Him.

Ver. 9.—'For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.' One naturally inquires here how it is that the death and resurrection of Christ stand connected with His right of dominion or lordship over both the dead and the living. That His death, in particular, gave Him a rightful sovereignty over the living, is otherwise expressed by the apostle in the following passage—"If one died for all, then were all dead; and he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." It is indeed a most rightful thing, that as He poured out His soul unto the death for us, we should give up our souls in absolute and entire dedication to Him. By His death He purchased us, and made us His own. We are His property, as bought with the price of His blood;* and therefore it is our part to glorify the Lord with our soul and spirit and body, which are the Lord's. And again, as to the effect of His resurrection, we are told that Christ is the first-fruits of them who slept—that because He liveth we shall live also—through death He destroyed him who had the power of death; and so, in virtue of the power wherewith He is now invested over heaven and earth, He can, in behalf of His captives in the grave, open for them the door of their prison-house, and make them sit together with Himself in heavenly places, even around that throne of exaltation to which He has Himself been raised—and this "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In this and many other scriptures, there is enough of harmony with the verse before us, to explain the dependence here stated between the lordship of Christ over both dead and living on the one hand, and His own death and own revival, upon the other.

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* 1 Pet. i. 19.

Ver. 10-13.—'But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.' The consideration stated in these verses is so very obvious, and put so clearly and conclusively, that it requires no lengthened illustration on our part. It had indeed been already put, in the fourth verse—'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth.' It really does not belong to us—it is not ours—thus to be judging and censuring one another. Speak not evil then one of another, and judge not thy brother—for thou thyself art but a doer of the law, and not a judge. Your business with the law is to obey it, and not to judge out of it. "Who art thou then that judgest another?" (James iv. 11, 12.) The reason given by the apostle last quoted for not reckoning with, and not grudging against one another, is, that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and that the Judge is at the door (James v. 9). The habit of sitting in judgment on each other, so prevalent not only in the world at large, but in the professingly religious world, is a peculiarly dangerous one—because it peculiarly exposes us, and that in the way of reaction or recompence, to the judgment of God. And accordingly we are told to judge not, "that we be not judged;" and that "with what judgment we judge we shall be judged" (Matt. vii. 2); and that if we will judge others, we must not think that ourselves shall "escape the judgment of God" (Rom. ii. 3); and finally, that we should abstain from this practice, lest ourselves "be condemned" (James v. 9). But the consideration urged here is not properly the danger of it, but rather, if I may so speak, the impertinence or the presumption of it. It is intruding on the office of another—an office wherewith He and He alone has been invested; and which it is competent for Him only to discharge. In the language of the Psalmist—when we thus venture on a function so sacred and so lofty, we really are meddling with a matter too high for us (Ps. cxxxi. 1). It is really not for us, who ourselves are to be sisted at the bar of judgment, thus to usurp the place of its tribunal, and take the judgment upon ourselves. This is the exclusive office of Him before whom every knee is to bow and every tongue to confess; and our right place is that of them who do this homage, not of Him who receives it. This sort of judgment therefore, the judgment of others, is not within our province—although there be another judgment which Paul does allow us to exercise, and which indeed he himself exemplifies—the judgment not of another's character, but of our own duty—the duty, not of pronouncing on what others are, but of performing what we owe to them, and owe them too in this very matter. No doubt he tells us authoritatively what this duty is; but he leaves us at liberty to form our own judgment in regard to the real truth and principle of the question, and to act accordingly. We are free to judge whether we should eat or not; but he lays it down as our clear and imperative obligation not to eat, if thereby we are to put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in our brother's way. None more tolerant than Paul in things doubtful or insignificant, yet none more peremptory or uncompromising than He when once the light of a clear and great principle breaks in upon him. Himself the strongest of the strong, he was yet the most indulgent of all men to the infirmities of the weak; nor can we imagine a more rare and beauteous combination than was realized by our apostle, who, without disturbance either to his enlightened conscience or manly understanding, could eat freely of all sorts of food—yet would eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest it should make his brother to offend (1 Cor. viii. 13).

Ver. 14-16.—'I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.

Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of.' Paul here asserts his own right of judgment on the absolute merits of the question, and tells us the result of it—even the persuasion, nay more positive than this, the knowledge, that no meat was unclean of itself. He further tells us, that he was so persuaded by the Lord Jesus—yet so unessential was this persuasion, so unimportant the point in question, that the same Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, did not interdict him from allowing to others the liberty of thinking differently. And accordingly at the very time of giving forth the sentence, and on the highest of all authority, that there is nothing unclean of itself, he yet leaves others at liberty to esteem anything unclean. We are not sure, if anywhere else in Scripture the divine authority of toleration is so clearly manifested, or so distinct a sanction given to a certain amount of liberty in opinion—even though it should be branded as latitudinarianism by those strainers at a rigid uniformity, who, as appears from this whole chapter, might carry their intolerance too far. Even at the expense of absolute, though not, it would appear, of indispensable truth, were men allowed to think of meats that they were unclean—and this in the face of the apostolic deliverance that they were not unclean. But while Paul suffered them to think so, he made it imperative, that if they thus thought, so also should they act. They were at liberty to think any particular meat unclean; but, so thinking, they were not at liberty to use it. This would have been to sin against the light of their own minds—to trample on the high prerogatives of conscience, which, even though mistaken, does not therefore forfeit the supreme authority which belongs to it.

'But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably'—or better and more impressive to the English reader—now walkest thou not in love. We are aware of nothing more attractive or amiable than the way in which Paul lets himself down to the weak, or than the flexibility of his accommodation to the harmless peculiarities even of the perverse and erring—all the more engaging in that, when the slightest inroad was offered upon essential principle, none more resolute or inflexible in withstanding it than he. The explanation of these two different, though by no means opposite or inconsistent aspects, in the mind of our great apostle, seems to be this—he, on the one hand, a strong man himself, could be all respect and indulgence to the weak; and he pressed upon others, strong as he was, the duty of being alike respectful and alike indulgent. But should these weak, on the other hand, not satisfied with this full allowance to themselves of their own peculiarities, impose these peculiarities on others as essential to salvation, and thus derogate from the sufficiency and the power of what Paul had all along and most zealously contended for as the alone ground of our acceptance with God, even the righteousness of Christ made ours by faith—then what he most freely and generously conceded to the infirmities of others, he would not, even by the minutest fraction, yield to their intolerance. The one he could do, for this were but an exercise of pity. The other he could not do, for this were a surrender of principle. And thus it is that acts of seeming contrariety in the life and ministry of Paul admit of being fully harmonized. When he circumcised Timothy, for example, and purified himself along with the four men who had a vow upon them for the accomplishment of certain rites prescribed by the law—these things he did under the influence of the first consideration, "because of the Jews which were in those quarters," as we read in one place; and in the spirit of charitable accommodation to the "many thousands of Jews which believe," as we read in another. Paul was quite satisfied that on all such questions, the Gentiles should let alone the Jews; and that the Jews, on the other hand, should let alone the Gentiles. But when the Jews, not content with a toleration for themselves, turned upon the Gentiles, and would compel them "to live as do the Jews" (Gal. ii. 14)—then it was that the influence of the second consideration came into play. And so the same Paul who circumcised Timothy (Acts xvi. 3), and purified himself according to the ritual of Moses (Acts xxi. 26), and that because of true brethren, who advised this deference to the Jews, that he might not grieve or disturb their consciences—would not suffer Titus to be circumcised (Gal. ii. 3, 4), and that because of false brethren, who would have made this deference to the Jews an occasion for bringing the Gentiles into bondage. To them he gave place by subjection, no not for an hour, and this for the sake of "the truth of the gospel." Nay, when Peter gave way in so far to this scheme of compulsion, Paul withstood him to the face—and this again "for the truth of the gospel." A generous and voluntary compliance with Jewish scrupulosity is one thing—a forced compliance with Jewish intolerance is quite another. Paul would have yielded the former, because he felt for those which were of the circumcision, and is therefore to be applauded. Peter would have yielded the latter, because he "feared them which were of the circumcision," and is therefore "to be blamed." We can never sufficiently admire the honourable and consistent way which our great apostle found out for himself, when pressed with difficulties on the right hand and on the left. When holding question with those of his countrymen who were burdened with their own weak and wounded consciences, Paul knew how to be meek and harmless as a dove. When holding question with those of his countrymen who, intent on judaizing the whole Christian world, would have laid the burden of their ritual upon others, and thus infringed on the great doctrine of justification by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law—then Paul knew how both to be wise as a serpent, and bold as a lion. As the exhibition of a well-balanced mind, there are few things more admirable than this: nor, after Him who is the great Pattern of all righteousness, is there any scriptural character in which the best qualities of our nature are more gracefully and harmoniously blended; or where the noble conjunction of truth with mercy, of firmness with gentleness, is more conspicuously realized.

It is on the side of tenderness that he appears at present; and in behalf of a distress wherewith he of all others could most readily and delicately sympathize—the distress of an afflicted conscience. Let not thy brother be grieved with thy meat. The mere spectacle of what he deems to be a profane violation is fitted to give him pain. Or if brought into a state of ambiguity on this question of meats, between the influence of his own Jewish education, which would lead him to abstain, and the influence of Christian example, which would lead him to indulge—the very conflict is painful. But worse than painful, it might come to be destructive, should the authority of this example overbear him into a premature compliance against the light of his own conscience, not yet satisfied. In the one way you grieve, in the other you would destroy him—destroy him whom Christ died to save. Surely a little self-denial on our part is not too much to maintain the safety of the object for which Christ gave Himself up unto the death.

'Let not then your good be evil spoken of.' He is addressing himself to the strong; and the good he here means, their especial good, was the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. This liberty was liable to be perverted and abused in various ways. For example, they had to be warned not to use this "liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (Gal. v. 13). And it is added, "but by love serve one another." Now they were violating this love, if to please themselves they were either grieving or hurting the consciences of their brethren. And so there was a limit or a discretion to be observed in the exercise of this liberty—a liberty which ought never to be indulged, either for the gratification of their own licentiousness, or in opposition to that love which they owed to others.

And the reason given in our text supplies another limitation. They should not unnecessarily expose this good to be evil spoken of—even though the evil should be spoken of it falsely, or undeservedly. We learn from 1 Cor. x. 30—that the eating of certain things, such as what had been offered unto idols, was liable to be thus spoken of; and so along with the liberty of the gospel, the gospel itself was slandered, and Christianity made to suffer at the hands of its own friends. It should be felt enough surely, if this liberty minister peace to our own consciences; and it is a most unthankful return on our part, if we so parade it before the eye of others as to excite prejudice and calumny thereby against the truth that is in Jesus. We might well surely deny ourselves somewhat for the good of the Church and the advancement of godliness among men. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

LECTURE XCVI.

ROMANS XIV. 17.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

'Joy in the Holy Ghost.' In the high and hidden walk of a Christian's experience, there is much that looks very inaccessible to the eye of the general world. And it is evident that just in proportion to their sense of its mystery and exceeding remoteness will be their own hopelessness of ever realizing it. They regard it as something of too recondite, too lofty a nature, for them to think of aspiring after. They have no fellowship with the joys or exercises of a believer, no common feeling and even no common understanding with Christ's peculiar people, in aught that distinguishes this class of men from the rest of the species; and so they keep at a distance from these saintly and select few, just as they would from any outlandish society with whose tastes and gratifications they had no possible sympathy—either taking refuge in the thought that it is all a fanatical imagination—or if it be indeed a reality, that it is a reality which lies at so wide a separation from themselves, as to mock their every effort to lay hold of it.

It must be quite obvious, that in these circumstances it is most unwise needlessly to aggravate this impression which men have of the gospel, as of a hopeless and impracticable mystery—for this will only widen their separation from it the more. It is not for the friends of Christianity to give it more of a transcendental air and character than what natively belongs to it—for this would be to check the approaches of the yet uninitiated, who might thus be deterred from the enterprise of ever scaling those heights which seem so awful, or of penetrating those obscurities which seem to cloud the summits, or to gather and settle among the deep recesses of experimental religion. Whatever can be made plain and palpable to the world at large, should be made to stand out in full exhibition before them; and nothing that is unnecessary or uncalled for should be said which can assist their conception either of the gospel as a thing that lies beyond the range of all ordinary apprehension, or of its disciples as of those who are kept together by some secret tact that is incommunicable to all other men—the spell of a magic or a masonry, that can only be known or guessed at by themselves.

We are sensible, however, that with every effort at the explanation of Christian truth, there will remain on the minds of all who are not Christians an impression of its mystery. The distinction will still be kept up between the children of light and the children of this world; and the former will appear to the latter as if they spoke in an unknown language. There will be little community of thought or of feeling betwixt them; and however desirable to make the most of any right approximation that is at all possible, yet we are not to expect but that in the whole cast and habitude of their understandings, the two societies of the Church and the world will ever be widely apart from each other.

These are the first reflections which our text has given rise to —for we are not aware of any that is more removed beyond the limits of all common and earthly experience. We even fear that among those who profess a stricter and more serious Christianity, this joy in the Holy Ghost is seldom realized; and that however much it may be in the harmony with their doctrinal speculations, they have little or no experimental feeling of it. This is a topic on which, if they have any doctrine at all, it is at least a doctrine that has outstripped their experience. They cannot speak of this joy as a thing that is personally and practically their own. They cannot specify an occasion of their history that has been at all brightened by it. They have no distinct imagination of what it is; and altogether it is even to them that matter of strangeness and of secrecy which they do not recollect ever to have shared in. They would like to know about it—for as yet, we doubt not, the conceptions of many even of these are vague and unsatisfactory; and therefore, to help the understandings even of the zealous and declared orthodox upon this topic, as well as to reconcile to the uttermost those who look upon our faith as little better than that of mystics and visionaries, we should like that as much of elucidation as possible could be shed upon a theme that is now-a-days either very little thought of, or regarded in the light of a wild and fanciful illusion.

It may perhaps tend in a certain degree to dissipate the mystery, if you advert to a distinction which I shall now propose to you. Joy in the Holy Ghost may be either a joy in His directly felt presence within you; or it may be a joy in the work which He has done within you. Now the first of these conceptions is far more mysterious than the second of them. We shall now inquire whether His presence as a visitor or indweller is ever felt directly—whether He is ever recognised to be in our hearts by any immediate feeling or immediate perception—whether, in short, the first conception is ever realized in the experience of any Christian below. Instead of knowing Him to be present in the way of contact or of His immediately felt and perceived residence within us, His presence in the soul of the believer may only be inferred, not from His contact with the human spirit, but from His work upon the human spirit. And so this joy in the Holy Ghost might mainly resolve itself into joy because of the truths which He has revealed to the eye of the understanding, and joy because of the virtues which He has impressed upon the character.

Let us take these two in order—dwelling very briefly on the first, and reserving our chief attention for the second of these particulars.

I. First, then, there is a joy felt in the belief and contemplation of the truths impressed on our conviction by God's Holy Spirit. Thus far the joy is not some mistaken afflatus which you can give no account of. You can distinctly tell what it is. There is a palpable thing which the Spirit has enabled you to lay hold of. He has taken of the things of Christ and showed them unto you. More particularly, He has shed a clearness on the efficacy of the atoning blood; and though He has let you know that you are a very great sinner, He has also let you know that Jesus Christ is a very great Saviour. That truth, to which you were aforetime blind, He, by opening your eye, has made you to see; and it is such a truth as you cannot but rejoice in. He has caused you both to see a truth and to hear a tenderness in that gospel voice which issues from the mercy-seat; and as surely as when the hostility of the best and most powerful of your earthly acquaintances is turned into friendship, you cannot but be glad—so surely will you feel a gladness so soon as made to behold that the God who challenges iniquity and cannot bear it in His presence has become God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, and not imputing unto them their trespasses. The man who is tossed and distracted because of the dangers and the fears which encompass him, when freed from these and so translated into peace, vividly feels a joy along with it. Now this peace is of the Spirit's working, just because the truth from which the peace did emanate is of the Spirit's teaching. He teaches it through the word, by opening our eyes to the reality of Scripture. And so the joy which is felt because of the first ingredient of Heaven's kingdom that is specified in our text, even because of the peace into which the sinner has been translated—this joy may be regarded as entering into the third ingredient of that kingdom, even joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. But secondly. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost because of the virtues which He has impressed upon the character. Here too there is something tangible, that furnishes, as it were, a material for our joy. The Holy Ghost works virtue in the character of him upon whom He operates; and joy in this virtue is joy in the Holy Ghost. Here is another abatement then, on the supposed mystery of this affection; and although we cannot go along with those who term themselves rational Christians, and would expunge all mystery from the doctrines of the gospel—yet we hold it most undesirable that any of its truths should be enveloped in greater mystery than properly belongs to them; and, on the other hand, most desirable that all should be made as plain to the understanding as the actual state of revelation and the possibilities of human knowledge and comprehension will allow. We are aware of one expedient which we cannot go along with, and by which it has been attempted to make the whole of that theology which relates to the visitation and indwelling of the Holy Ghost more palatable to the intellect of the natural man. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of God; and whether that Spirit take up His residence within our hearts or not—whether or not He abide substantively there—whether He be in us as an essence, or only as a quality—still it is thought by many enough to warrant the gospel affirmation, that Christians have the Spirit of God if they have barely the characteristics of that Spirit fixed and delineated upon their own moral nature. And so in the estimation of many, to have the Spirit of God is just to have a character kindred to that of God, just as in common language we may say of one man that he has in him the soul of Newton, if he have the like taste and talent for philosophy—or that he has the spirit of some great statesman, if animated by the same patriotism—or of some great warrior, if actuated by the same thirst for the hazards and excitements of the contest—and so to have the Spirit of God is regarded as tantamount, not to having that very Spirit within the receptacles of your bosom, but to your having a spirit there which is like unto His—and thus to have the Holy Spirit only designs you to be a holy creature, or that you have within you the spirit of holiness.

Now certain it is, in the first instance, that this view of the matter tends to alleviate the mystery, and reduces the doctrine of God's Spirit being in man to a something which those of merely secular or literary habits of conception can easily understand. If by having the Spirit of God within us, there is nothing more meant than that our spirit is kindred to that of God—there is in this affirmation nought of that miraculous sort of aspect which provokes the incredulity of nature. It is simply assigning to our mind the character which it happens to possess; and it must moreover be admitted, that whether a similarity between our spirits and that of God be the whole doctrine or not—this similarity is allowed by all to be the undoubted effect of that inhabitation by the Holy Ghost of man as His dwelling-place, and man as His temple, which many, and we think soundly and scripturally, do contend for. The great object in fact of the Spirit's descent upon earth, and of His assuming as the place of His occupancy this one man and that other, is to impress upon them the very image and character of God. He bloweth where He listeth, but the design of it is to inspire every one whom He so listeth with the very virtues of the Godhead—and so there is one view, according to which this joy in the Holy Ghost is really not at all unintelligible, nor ought it to stir up that incredulity which a feeling of the marvellous and the incomprehensible so often brings along with it. It is simply that direct joy which we have in the possession and the exercise of virtue. Joy in the Holy Ghost is the joy that naturally and constitutionally as it were, attaches to the spirit of holiness. If it be not pleasure in the immediate fellowship of God's Spirit, it is at least pleasure in its fruits, all of which are sweet unto the taste, and have in them what may be called a moral fragrance that ministers delight to the higher senses and faculties of our nature. There is an instant gratification to the heart in its own aspirations of love and purity and heaven-born sacredness; and if these indeed come from the Spirit, then it is a gratification in what He hath done and wrought upon us, and this is joy in the

Holy Ghost. We may not be able to recognise His direct presence in our bosoms; but if we rejoice in the virtues which He hath implanted there, then it may truly be said that in Him we rejoice. And thus there may be many who have realized this affection, and yet perhaps have hitherto conceived that they were strangers to it; and just because they were looking for something else. They have perhaps been thinking all along that joy in the Holy Ghost was a felt and conscious delight from fellowship with a visitor within, of whose personal agency and indwelling they had some mysterious access to know—otherwise than by the fruits of His operation, otherwise than by the graces and virtues which He impressed upon the character. Now should it so happen, that He is only known by His fruits—should the presence of God's Spirit in the soul, instead of being a matter of direct consciousness, be only a matter of inference from the graces and the virtues that be engraven upon the soul, then when rejoicing in them we may in fact be rejoicing in the Holy Ghost. There are some, we are persuaded, who have experienced this affection without knowing it. They have breathed a holy and a heavenly delight in prayer. They have felt a lofty and ethereal transport in the contemplations of sacredness. They have experienced how good a thing it is to draw near unto God, and in the beatitudes of intercourse with Him as their Friend and reconciled Father, they have often tasted upon earth of those very beatitudes which shall be perfected in heaven. They have had the dawn upon their spirits even here of that ecstasy which lies in an affection for the Godhead; and in the outflowings of a kindred love towards their brethren of the species, they have also felt that there is a native and most exhilarating joy. Now during the whole of this experience, they may not have adverted to the Spirit as at the time dwelling and operating within them; and in the very moment when they were rejoicing in His work, they may not have been at all sensible that they were rejoicing in Himself. Nevertheless it is even so. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost which is not more inexplicable than the joy that every Christian feels in the play and exercise of his good affections—in the good-will that moves him kindly towards one—in the gratitude that draws him in loving regards and services to another—in the virtuous triumphs of temperance or purity, when the eye has closed itself against some ensnaring temptation, or when a victorious resistance has been made to it—in the fervour of those more saintly and celestial exercises, when the soul enters into communion with its God; and just as the eye delights itself with all that is graceful or engaging in the scenery of nature, so is the spiritual eye regaled when it expatiates over the graces of that moral imagery which stands revealed on the character of the Godhead. It is thus that there may be a joy in the Holy Ghost, even when He is not thought of in His personality, or in the power of His influences upon the human spirit. It is a very possible thing to be under an influence, and at the very time when the influence itself is not at all the object of contemplation. The mind may in truth be busied with other objects. It may be thinking only of God or of man or of duty; or of those precious truths on which hang the salvation of the sinner, and his obligation to a life of sacredness—and the only delight whereof it may be conscious, is the delight that it has in entertaining these, and in feeling virtuously of these. Yet still, it may be true that it is both the Holy Ghost who hath introduced him to a luminous view of the objects, and who hath awakened in him all the good and corresponding emotions; and so, while to all sense he is occupied with virtue alone, and the joy that is felt by him is therefore a joy in virtue—yet nevertheless it is the Spirit that has originated and sustains the whole; and his joy in virtue is joy in the Holy Ghost.

According to this view of it, then, joy in the Holy Ghost is joy in holiness; and it appears by our text to be one ingredient of the kingdom of heaven. By partaking of the Spirit of God, we are made to partake in the virtues of the Godhead; and the joy in question is a joy in these virtues. It is just such delight as the Eternal Himself has in the view and in the conscious possession of his own excellence—that primeval delight which cometh out of the inseparable union that obtained from everlasting between goodness and happiness—realized by the Mind of the Divinity, and reproduced in the minds on which He has stamped the likeness of His own character. There may be no way of recognising the power of an agent within your heart, but by the effects of his agency. There may be no way of ascertaining that the hand of a worker has been there, but by his handiwork; and all the pleasure which many a Christian feels in the Holy Ghost may be nothing more than the pleasure that is felt in those moralities of the heart, into which he has been renewed, and which are the traces of the Spirit's operation. If you want to ascertain whether ever you had the joy of our text, it is surely indispensable that you fix and determine what sort of thing it is. You may otherwise be led upon a wrong track of inquiry; and droop into despondency because you have not met with an evidence that is nowhere to be found. In regard to the Spirit of God, you neither hear His voice, nor do you see His shape; and you cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. But you may know Him by His fruits; and if these fruits do indeed regale your moral appetite for goodness and righteousness and truth—if obedience be the fruit; and you feel that in this obedience, as in the keeping of the commandments, there is a great reward — if gladness have sprung up in your heart along with the graces of the new creature—if you have ever tasted that to be in a holy is to be in a happy frame; and that to breathe in a religious atmosphere is of itself to breathe in an atmosphere of purest delight—this perhaps is all the evidence that you have a warrant to look for; and instead of expecting a joy in the Holy Ghost analogous to that which one has in personal intercourse with a friend—instead of beholding any direct manifestation of His presence within you, you may never on this side of death be admitted to see more than the marks of His performance upon you; and we repeat, that if you have ever felt a joy in the meekness and the godliness and the love and the temperance and the purity which it is His office to impress upon the soul, this may be joy in the Holy Ghost—this may be the very joy that you are in quest of.

And by urging this upon you, I have another object in view than to guide you aright in the pursuit of evidence. I should like to take an opportunity now of expounding to you the real essence of heaven's blessedness. This joy in the Holy Ghost is an ingredient of the kingdom of heaven; and you cannot be too pointedly or repeatedly told—that what constitutes your happiness there, is that which has constituted the happiness of the Godhead from all eternity. I wish you to separate in thought the main and characteristic enjoyments of paradise from all those secondary or subordinate enjoyments wherewith we fancy it to be peopled; and again to assure you that the ecstasy of these ethereal abodes lies not in heaven's music, or heaven's splendour, or any adaptation between the materialism of heaven and the glorified senses of those who are admitted to its transports and its triumphs. The joy in the Holy Ghost which will be enhanced and perfected there, and of which we have here a foretaste, is the joy which God Himself has in holiness. He delights in His own Spirit, in His graces, in His attributes, in all the beauteous and venerable characteristics which belong to Him; and by imparting to us of this Spirit, He gives us the very materials of that delight which constitutes His own essential and unchangeable happiness. In other words, the joy of heaven is mainly and substantially speaking, a moral, a spiritual joy; and if the greatest happiness lie in the enjoyment of what we most love, then the best definition that can be given of the happiness of immortality, is that it consists in the enjoyment of righteousness by those whose nature it is supremely to love righteousness. To them the most delicious harmony by far is that moral harmony which they feel to be within their own heart, where righteousness hath taken up its secure and everlasting possession; and to them the most glorious of all splendour is that splendid righteousness wherewith, among the angels and saints and hosts both of the redeemed and the unfallen, they are everywhere encompassed. But chiefly will they have joy in the city of the living God, because God Himself is there; and the light of His manifested countenance will be the light thereof. It is because of the worth and the goodness and the moral grace and grandeur that radiate directly upon their view from the aspect of the Divinity—it is because of the high and the holy perfections of virtue which sit enthroned in the place where His honour dwelleth—it is because of the sympathy which through the Spirit given to us is felt in our own bosom with the virtues of the Godhead, and the love wherewith He rejoices over those creatures on whom He hath impressed the lineaments of His own holy nature, reflected back again by them on that primary excellence from which all their holiness is derived—it is because of these moral elements that the joy of paradise is full. All there have a godlike virtue, and therefore it is that their happiness is godlike.

And it would at once purify your thoughts of heaven, and deliver the work of your preparation for it from all taint of legalism, could you but clearly understand that the great object of the economy under which you sit is to make you like to God both in character and in enjoyment. Just think what it is that forms His motive to righteousness. Just make out a distinct reply to the one question—whether is God righteous because of a law of righteousness that is over Him, or because of the love to righteousness that is in Him? He, it is obvious, is under no law, and is responsible to no jurisdiction. Any act of virtue in Him is not an act of deference to any authority—nor is it in submission to the control or the cognisance of any superior. When He does what is right, it is not because He is so bidden, but because to His taste there is a beauty and a beatitude in rightness. The virtue that is observed as a thing of commandment, is of a character wholly dissimilar and distinct from the virtue that is indulged in as a thing of native and spontaneous delight. Now, God is not the subject of a commandment. All that He does is not of constraint from without, but of choice from within; and when righteousness from a matter of constraint becomes a matter of choice, it instantly changes its whole nature, and rises to a higher moral rank than before. It is impossible that God can be at all moved by the authority of a law, or that the fear of its reckoning or its vengeance can have any weight upon Him. And so we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are dead unto the law—that is, dead to a sense of its threatenings—dead to all feeling of compulsion—delivered from every impression of a superior standing over us, and overbearing our own pleasure by his resistless prerogative and power. But the same God whom it is impossible to move by law's authority, moves of His own proper and original inclination in the very path of the law's righteousness. And so again, we, in proportion as we are like unto God, are alive to the virtues of that same law, to the terror of whose severities we are altogether dead. We are no longer under a schoolmaster. Our obedience is changed from a thing of force into a thing of freeness. It is moulded to a higher state and character than before. We are not driven to it by the rod of authority. We are drawn to it by the regards of a now willing heart to all moral and all spiritual excellence. It is upon a well of living water being struck out in the heart of renovated man—it is upon the entrance there by the Holy Ghost given unto all who receive the Saviour—it is upon His operation by which we are made to delight in the very moralities, and so to taste the very joys of the Godhead—it is upon that transformation by which the spirit of bondage is cast out, and succeeded by the spirit of adoption and of glorious liberty—it is thus that the joy of my text arises in the disciple's bosom; and while even here it forms an ingredient of heaven's kingdom, it is also the best presage of that eternal heaven which is awaiting him.

Such views, if more cherished and more proceeded on, would do away every imagination of an antinomianism in the gospel of

Jesus Christ. The end of that gospel is not to set aside human virtue, but altogether to purify and to raise it. It is to set aside an old economy, by which virtue was prescribed; but under which it became an ignoble thing, and gathered upon its whole aspect a taint of mercenary sordidness. And it is to substitute a new economy in its place, under which virtue, so far from being expunged, is animated by the very spirit and brightened into those very hues of loveliness wherewith it is irradiated in the sanctuary of the Eternal. It is to exalt the selfish and low-born morality of earth into the sacredness of heaven; and not to extort the offerings of reluctance and fear, but to inspire at the very time that it bids the services of an affectionate and willing obedience. I do not ask, if you ever rejoiced in the Spirit of God felt as if personally alive and present in your bosom. This is a test of your discipleship to which I fear that few if any of this, and very few of any congregation whatever, could respond. But I ask, if you ever rejoiced in the law of God, felt to be that pure and righteous and elevated thing which the Psalmist professed to be his delight and meditation all the day. This is a test that I do insist upon; and if not a joy in the direct feeling of the Spirit's presence, it is at least a joy in the fruit of the Spirit's power. It is all the length to which I feel warranted to carry my explanation; and a length to which, if there be any one here present who has practically come, we can at least promise to him the blessedness of the man who delighteth greatly in the commandments.

In our first head, we spake of the joy that is felt on our believing the truths of the gospel, and more especially the truth of God's reconciliation to us in Christ Jesus. We are glad because of peace betwixt us and God; and peace is one ingredient of heaven's kingdom mentioned in our text. In our second head of discourse, we spoke of the joy that is felt on our acquiring the virtues of the gospel. There is an immediate delight in righteousness or virtue, that accrues by a law of moral nature to the possessor of it; and righteousness is another ingredient of heaven's kingdom mentioned in our text. Joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the third ingredient, may be regarded by some as joy in the two former; and called joy in the Holy Ghost, simply because peace and righteousness are the work of the Holy Ghost. But additionally to the joy which the mind has in these effects of the Spirit's operation, there must, after experience of these effects, be a distinct joy, when the mind takes cognisance of them in connexion with their cause—when the Christian can trace the virtues which he has been enabled to exercise, to the source from whence they emanate—when he finds, that in proportion to the fervency and faith of his prayers for the Spirit of all grace, he is actually made rich in the graces and accomplishments of the new creature. There is a joy in the very investiture of these moralities; but a further and a distinct joy in the consideration of who it is that has put them on. When the Christian reflects on himself as a temple of the Holy Ghost—when he thinks of being so signalized—when enabled thus to judge that God walks in him and dwells in him; and upon this evidence, that He has put a law into his heart making him to love it, and written it in his mind making him to understand it—there is elevation in the very thought; and though it may not be joy in the directly felt presence, yet it may be joy in the inferred presence of the Holy Ghost. To arrive at this, my brethren, you have to entertain the truths of the gospel, even until you come clearly to see and firmly to have faith in them. You have to cultivate the virtues of the gospel, even until they become the main delight and exercise of your lives. You have to pray that the eye might be made clearly to apprehend the one; and the heart to be more and more smitten with a love for the other, and a sense of their supreme obligation. You are to persevere in asking even till you receive, and in seeking even till you find, and in knocking even till it be opened to you; and however remote and recondite the acquirement may appear to you now—yet, if you will just set out in good earnest from the humble elements of Christian scholarship and go on unto perfection, you will, from a joy in the truth and a joy in the virtues of the gospel, arrive at a distinct joy in the fellowship of Him who hath manifested these truths, and moulded you to these virtues. You will pass on to the higher stages of the Christian experience, and be at length emboldened to say that the Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits, that we are indeed his children; and hereby know we that we are in Him, even by the Spirit which He hath given to us.

LECTURE XCVII.

ROMANS XIV. 17-23.

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

We recur to the seventeenth verse in this lecture, simply because of the immediate reference made to it in the verse which follows—'He that in *these things* serveth Christ'—serveth Him in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost—these things are both acceptable to God and approved of men. The circumstance of their being approved of men, as well as acceptable to God, plainly enough intimates that the social is blended with the sacred in the services here specified. The righteousness of our text includes not only the righteousness which is made ours by the faith that is well-pleasing to God, but also the righteousness that is good and profitable to men. The peace comprehends in it not only that peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeping our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, but also the pacific virtues of the blameless and unoffending citizen, who does all that in him lies to maintain concord and good-will in his neighbourhood. Even the joy, though primarily it be that joy in the Lord which is the strength and aliment of the spiritual life—yet as being the opposite of moroseness, or of sullen and infectious gloom, is fitted to have a gladdening influence over the daily companionships of that believer who serves his God, not in the spirit of fear, but in the spirit of love and peace and a sound mind. In all these ways may the virtues of the seventeenth verse realize the twofold property ascribed to them in the eighteenth: they may at once be acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

Ver. 19.—'Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.' In this pacific spirit, the spirit of conciliation and charity, let us follow after the things which make for peace—not after the vain questions which minister strife rather than godly edifying, but after the great and undoubted objects on which all the real disciples of Jesus are sure to coalesce, and to strive for with one mind and one soul. The things on which they agree are not only far more numerous, but of greatly surpassing importance as compared with those which differ—provoking each other to love and to good works—exhorting one another daily, while it is called to-day—assembling together in meetings of fellowship and prayer, for their mutual confirmation both in the faith and holiness of the gospel—uniting in their schemes of Christian philanthropy, the combined prosecution of which in our day has led to many a delightful reunion of spirit among professing Christians, and given rise to so many periodic festivals of a common cause and common charity, in which all might rejoice, —these be the things that make for peace, and which, within the limits of essential principle, will cause all sectarian diversities to be forgotten.

'And things wherewith one may edify another.' Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church (1 Cor. xiv. 12). Let us live not peaceably only, but profitably with each other. He had before told his converts, as far as possible, and as much as lay in them, to live peaceably with all men. He was obliged to lay these qualifications on the advice he gave them—for purity is a higher object than peace; and as it is our first duty to profit men rather than please them, it might often be impracticable to labour for the convenience of saints without stirring up the enmity of unconverted nature. But whatever danger there may be of exciting the displeasure of the unregenerate in our attempts to convert, there is far less danger of incurring the wrath or hostility of disciples in our attempts to edify—provided only, however, that we keep by the things which make for edification. We cannot answer for that unanimity which is so desirable, if Christians will be so pragmatical and injudicious as to be urging their own small and senseless peculiarities on the acceptance of others. Would they only keep by what is great and essential, seldom or never would any real Christian fall out by the way. They are the vain janglings about words of no profit which minister to wrath rather than to godly edifying; and often the very reason why the things which men follow after make not for peace, is because they make not for edification. Surely there is good and worthy cause here why a disproportionate stress should not be laid upon trifles. A most important, any a vital interest may hinge upon it. Our Saviour's prayer (John xvii.) would intimate that the progress of Christianity in the world, its further and larger acceptance among men, depends most materially on the ostensible unity of those who are already Christians. They are the divisions of the religious world which have proved so fatal to the growth of religion in society. Zeal is a good thing, but only when expended on a good and adequate subject. It is not to be told what mischief has been done by needless controversies—both within the Church among Christians themselves, and without, in restraining the operation of that good leaven which might otherwise have leavened all the families of the earth. Christ's prayer on earth for His disciples was, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

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* For a larger exposition of this verse, see the second of the 'Commercial Discourses.'

Ver. 20.—'For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.' Do not for the sake of meat destroy the work of God—a reiteration of what he had said before in ver. 15—'Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.' For if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy. It is true that that which entereth into a man defileth not a man; and as far as the effects of the mere material entry of any sort of food into the stomach are concerned, "all things are pure." God hath now abolished the distinction between clean and unclean meats; and what He hath cleansed, that call not thou common or impure. The evil thing lies not in the eating, but in the eating with offence. It is the offence, and that alone, which constitutes the evil. There is no evil that results from eating, if no spiritual injury is sustained by it. But there does accrue a very great spiritual injury, if not to yourself, at least to your brother—if you so eat as to make him fall.

Ver. 21.—'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' In opposition to what he denounces as evil in the preceding verse, he tells us what is good in the present one —a good which he himself nobly exemplified, when he said that he would not eat flesh while the world standeth, lest it should make his brother to offend. He would not grieve him by stirring up weak and anxious scrupulosities in his mind: and, what is worse than merely grieving, he would not seduce him into an act of positive transgression, by causing him to outrun the light of his own conscience—which he would do, if, through the power of imitation, he tempted him to eat that which he saw himself eat, before that he was fully convinced of its lawfulness. The good or the evil all hinged, not on the thing in itself, but on the effect it was calculated to have, or actually had, on the practice of others—which practice was in them sinful, if it traversed their own principles. It is thus that our eating might prove the putting of a stumblingblock, or an occasion to fall in a brother's way.

Ver. 22.—'Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.' It is obvious that Paul had a greater respect for him whose conscience was free of these difficulties, and of the consequent distress that ensued from them. The man who felt himself at liberty, had on these questions at least "the spirit of power and of a sound mind," which in one of his addresses to Timothy he opposes to the spirit of fear (2 Tim. i. 7). But to complete the description of that which he commends, we must add the spirit of love also; and this would lead us to look not only at our own things, but at the things of others. It is very well for himself that his conscience does not trouble him—so that whether he eateth or eateth not, his own peace with God might remain unbroken. It is a happy thing for him that he condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. This is so far good; and were self one's only concern, there might in this matter be the indulgence of an unbounded liberty. But there are other interests at stake; and he is bound by the obligation of God's second great law to look at these. More especially is he bound not to give offence, in a thing not of obligation but of indifferency, so as to pain his brother's feelings, or gall him in a matter on which he is sore or weak; and still more not to place a stumblingblock before him over which he might fall by running against the light of his own convictions; for though the strong man may eat, because, believing it to be lawful, with him to eat is a matter of indifferency—the weak man may not eat, because if he do, believing it to be unlawful, then it would prove that with him to sin were a matter of indifferency. 'Hast thou faith ?' is a question which does not refer to the faith that is unto salvation, but to clearness in the matter on hand ;—art thou clear and confident as to the lawfulness of eating what by the law of Moses was forbidden ? They who are not clear, but stand in doubt, have not faith in this matter, though they may have the faith which is unto salvation. He who has the faith, who is fully persuaded in his own mind that to eat is allowable —let him have it to himself before God. There is no call upon him to parade it before others, so as either to hurt their religious sensibilities, or to harass them with doubtful disputations.

Ver. 23.—'And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith : for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' For 'he that doubteth,' the translation would be as correct in itself, and more accordant with the apostle's reasoning, if we read 'he that discerneth and putteth a difference between meats.' It is so given in the margin of some of our Bibles. The judaizing Christian did something more than doubt the lawfulness of eating what was forbidden by the Mosaic law : he had the positive conviction of its unlawfulness. For him then to eat would be to sin, not in the face of a doubt, but, worse than this, in the face of an absolute and affirmative conviction. It is proper, however, to observe, that even to do that of which one doubts, or is not sure whether it be lawful or not, has in it a certain, though it may be a less degree of moral hardihood. It is to incur the hazard, if not the certainty, of falling into a transgression ; and to brave such a risk, argues a weak feeling of religious obligation.

At the same time, it is proper further to remark—that whereas the word 'damnation,' in the common acceptation, means the future and everlasting punishment of the wicked, the proper and original meaning of it is 'condemnation'—marking therefore the blameworthiness of the act to which it is applied, but not necessarily implying the final and irreversible ruin of him who has committed it. The same observation holds true of 1 Cor. xi. 29—"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) unto himself." This mitigation of the sense will not make any real Christian less careful of offending.

'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' This here is not the universal proposition which some would make of it. It does not mean that every action of an unbeliever is sinful, because he wants that justifying faith without which there can be no acceptance either for his person or his services. This may be true, but it is not the truth contained in this passage. As we said before, the faith here spoken of is a faith limited to a particular point. The man has not the belief that to eat certain kinds of food is lawful; and if he eat of them notwithstanding, to him it is unlawful.

We are not to imagine of this chapter, that the subject of it has now gone by. There are principles here of universal and abiding application—lessons of standing authority, the obligation and importance of which remain to this day; and though the casuistry of Jewish meats may seldom or never be in practical demand amongst us, yet is there a certain other casuistry, which gives rise, as before, to the distinction between weak and strong; and which still continues to exercise, and sometimes to perplex the consciences of inquirers.

In separating, as our great apostle did with inimitable skill, the clear from the doubtful, there is one obvious consideration which ought never to be forgotten. Each man is still his brother's keeper. We are all responsible to a certain extent for the Christianity of other men; and though there be many indulgences which, viewed singly and in themselves, the light and liberty of the gospel would allow, yet are we bound to abstain from them, if our example otherwise would inflict a moral injury upon any of our fellows. Let me notice, as a case in point, the literalities of Sabbath observation. There are certain imaginable freedoms on that day—an evening walk—an act of convivial intercourse with a pious relative or friend—a journey, a visit, or written message in reply to some call of greater or less urgency, but the necessity of which, or the mercy of which, admits of being variously interpreted. Many will be found to contend for the innocence of these; and perhaps some undoubted Christians there are, who may occasionally give in to them, without violence to their own consciences, or even any damage done to their own spirituality. But there may be others looking on of a different habit and education, who could not share in these liberties without a shock on their religious feelings; or it may be such a stress on the inner man as might seriously derange and put out of joint the whole structure or system of their religious character. They may have been precipitated into an imitation which yet sat heavy on their consciences—condemning themselves in that to which the example of another may have emboldened them; and in which circumstances, therefore, more especially if the danger of an issue so lamentable was known, the example ought not to have been given. It is thus, we apprehend, that an English Christian would acquit himself during his temporary residence in one of the retired parishes of Scotland. He would conform to our standard of Sabbath observation; and in the exercise of a right delicacy and discretion, would refrain here from liberties which might be comparatively harmless in or around his own dwelling-place. He would not, for instance, if made aware, scandalize the domestics of any of our families, by superadding the instrumental music of the drawing-room to the worship of Sabbath eve—though, possibly with him a usual accompaniment, it might minister to the devotion of his own feelings, and so add to the perfection of the service. Would that this principle had been more respected ere the fearful experiment now in progress of railway desecration had been so recklessly gone into; and which, if persevered in, threatens to speed beyond all calculation the religious degeneracy of our beloved land.

As a further exemplification of the principles unfolded in this chapter, we might instance those numerous questions, of shade and degree, which have been raised about conformity to the world; or, more explicitly, about the share which may be lawfully taken in this world's companies or this world's amusements. Amid the difficulties, perhaps the impossibility, of advancing any strict and literal solution which shall be applicable to all cases, there is one thing unquestionable—and that is the concern which all ought to feel for the moral safety of others beside themselves. Grant of the strong Christian that he may pass unscathed through the festive parties of the ungodly, and perhaps even leave the savour of what is good in the midst of them; or grant that without injury to his own spirit, he may lend his occasional presence to certain of the haunts of public or fashionable entertainment—it must not be forgotten that many are the weak Christians, who, if led to the premature imitation of his example, would inevitably perish among the surrounding contaminations of an atmosphere which they could not breathe in and yet live. There can be no mistaking here the application of Paul's heroic and truly high-minded example. He would not eat flesh while the world standeth, should it make his brother to offend; and neither ought we to enter the ballroom or theatre while the world standeth, if it make even the very weakest of our brethren to offend. It were making an unlawful use of our Christian liberty to do even that which is lawful, should it precipitate others to do the same things, if either with a deleterious effect upon their characters, or if beyond the concurrence and bidding of their own consciences.

And if in things doubtful or indifferent, it be the duty of any Christian to deny himself for the sake of others, how much more imperative is the obligation under which he lies to refrain from the example of all that is clearly and undoubtedly wrong. It is not to be told what enormous mischief has been done by the infirmities, and still more by the sins of those who have attained a name and eminent reputation in the Christian world—and this in the way of tempting others to relax the strictness of their lives, because concluding that they too are surely within the limits of safety, though with the same amount of carelessness and sinfulness which they see to be in those whom all have agreed to acknowledge and admire. The pernicious consequences of even an occasional slip, and still more of a sinful habit, in professors of high standing, are truly deplorable, and such as to lay them under a deep responsibility for the souls of others as well as their own souls. Their fall might involve the fall of many. Because of their misconduct the spirituality of many might wax cold. Their mere follies or faults of temper might serve to lower the standard of practical Christianity in their neighbourhood. Even their wrongness and waywardness in little things may cast a soil on the profession of the gospel; and when, instead of a small, a great moral injury is done—how dreadful the penalty! For wo to the world because of offences. It were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of Christ's little ones.

There is another, and we think a most legitimate inference, to be drawn from this passage. It is that Christians should either cease to differ—or, if this be impossible, that then they should agree to differ. We of course exclude such differences as, relating to what is vital and essential, imply that either one or other of the parties is not Christian—disowning, as they do, some weightier matters, whether of doctrine or of the law. There is a territory within which controversy is not only permitted but enjoined; and so we are bidden to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. And there is another territory within which controversy has had the interdict, and that of sacred and scriptural authority, laid upon it; and so we are told to avoid foolish and hurtful questions, and to indulge not in vain janglings, and to refrain from doubtful disputations: and we hold it a mighty reinforcement of this lesson by the apostle, that our Saviour should have rebuked His disciples, because they forebade the man who worked miracles yet followed not after themselves, saying, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us. It may be difficult to assign in theory the limit between these two territories—yet, with a stronger and more general charity in the religious world, we feel persuaded that it were not so difficult to conform to it in practice. The treatise which should undertake to define and set forth the line of demarcation, might very possibly give new impetus to the whirlpool of debate, being itself the brooding or fermenting cause of new controversies. This is a very likely result, whenever the subject is introduced or started anew on the field of argument. Yet we despair not that on the field of action, or in the real and actual administration of the Church's affairs, many of the stoutest and fiercest differences both of the present and former ages will at length fall into desuetude—so that all Christians might be at length brought to be of one mind; or, if not, that it shall at least be patent to the eyes of the world, that they are all of one spirit. We are aware of liberalism, that it is a term recently devised to express a spurious liberality, or this virtue carried to a hurtful and unprincipled excess. And we are also aware that latitudinarianism is generally employed in a stigmatical or bad meaning, else we might have said there is a wholesome latitudinarianism. For example, we cannot imagine how one should read in moral fairness the Epistle to the Romans, or still more perhaps the Epistle to the Galatians—and yet, if he defer to these scriptures at all, should reject the doctrine of justification by faith alone,—so that to recognise as Christians those who deny this article, we should hold to be liberalism. Again, there are other differences, on neither side of which has the Bible left any such express or authoritative deliverance, as would lead us to pronounce of one or other of the parties, not only that they are in the wrong, but fatally in the wrong. We should rank among these differences many questions of meats and days and priestly vestments, and many points both of Church order and Church government—so that to recognise as Christians those of the

Episcopalian or Independent or Methodist or Baptist persuasions, we should hold not to be liberalism, but right and genuine liberality. Paul exemplified both these methods of dealing with controversies and disposing of them—bold and resolute and uncompromising in all that was essential—yielding and generous in all that was not so; and however strong and free from all scrupulosity himself, yet deferring with the utmost tenderness to the honest and conscientious scruples of other men. He thus acquitted himself of two most important services—the one as an intrepid soldier, the manly defender and guardian of the Church's purity; the other as a discreet and wary counsellor, who knew both how to judge charitably, and to arbitrate wisely, for the Church's unity and peace.

And unless we follow this high example, we do not see how the blissful consummation of that unanimity in the Christian world, of which our Saviour speaks as the stepping-stone to a universal Christianity throughout the world at large,* is ever to be arrived at. Surely for the fulfilment of this sacred object, it were well that in the confessions of different Churches, articles of faith, viewed as articles of distinction or separation, should not be unnecessarily multiplied; and we would further submit, whether it is not a most unwarrantable hazarding of this high and precious interest, to speak of the exclusively divine right of any form whatever of ecclesiastical government. It is thus that certain strenuous advocates both of Presbytery on the one hand, and of Episcopacy on the other, have been heard to affirm, that they will never consent to the loosening or letting down of a single pin in the tabernacle. This tenacity of theirs we should all the more readily understand, if specific information in regard to each and every pin were really to be found in Scripture. But in the absence of this, we do think that there might be a great deal more of mutual toleration. It has been well said, that, while it is our duty to be wise up to that which is written, we should not attempt to be wise above or beyond it; and so, too, while it is our duty to be inflexible up to that which is written, it is surely not our part to be inflexible beyond it. We feel confident, that with the use and right application of this principle, there is immense room for the abridgment of the Church's controversies. Let us hope that the movement is upon the whole in this direction; and that, even amid the fits and fermentations of this busy period, the Christian world is now heaving towards this better state of things—when the war of opinions shall cease, and both truth and charity shall walk hand in hand. Heaven grant that this perspective of brighter and happier days may be speedily realized.

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* John xvii. 21, 23.

And let us not be afraid lest, when controversies shall cease, men should therefore sink down into the ease and indifferency of liberalism. The tension of the mind will be fully kept up, but in another direction, and in a better way. If Christians will not then strive so much for the mastery in argument, they will be differently and far more profitably employed—in provoking to love and to good works. They may not be so intent on the work of judging each other, because far more intent on the exercise of judging themselves. Christianity will not be so much agitated as a question of opinion between man and man; but far more sedulously prosecuted as a question between God and their own consciences. There will still be ample room for zeal and strenuousness—for an ardour that will burn with as pure and bright a flame, if not so fiercely as before. Ere the Church militant shall become the Church triumphant—we may still have to fight the battles of principle and of the faith with them who are without; but let us hope that our internal wars shall cease, by the differences among ourselves being healed. And let us not imagine that because there will then be the repose of mutual charity and peace, there must therefore be the indolence of quietude. The struggle to be uppermost on the field of championship will then give way before a kindlier and more generous emulation—the struggle to be foremost in zeal for the glory of God, and for all the services of Christian philanthropy; and this, too, without the heart-burnings of rivalship or envy. For they will be all the readier in honour to prefer each other when they shall have become more alive to their own shortcomings than to the perversities or defects of their fellow-men. Even now, and notwithstanding the manifold yet chiefly incidental controversies of our day, men in theology are looking greatly more to the points of agreement, and less to the points of difference—the promise and preparation, let us hope, for a long millennium of peace and prosperity to the Christian world.

LECTURE XCVIII.

ROMANS XV. 1-13.

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

In the two first verses we are told what is the duty of the strong towards the weak—which duty is an obvious practical inference from the principles laid down in the foregoing chapter. It was that they should please their neighbour, and not themselves. And yet Paul himself was in one sense anything but a man-pleaser. In his Epistle to the Galatians he appears in wholly another character; and so tells us there—"Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. i. 10). And in a former part of this epistle to the Romans, he says, to the commendation of those who had not gained the approval of the Jews by submitting to circumcision, that their praise was not of men but of God. This difference between Paul at one time and Paul at another lay altogether in this: he never sought the praise or pleasure of men as an end; but he often sought it as a means to an end. He sought it when he could serve Christ by it. It would not have served Christ, but the contrary, had he given in to the judaizing Christians in the Church of Galatia; and, in compliance with their demand, laid the rite of circumcision on their Gentile brethren—and this too on the ground that it was necessary for their salvation. He, had it been placed on the same footing, would also have resisted their abstinence from meats; but not when, without the concession of any such vital principle, this abstinence subserved the peace or extension of the Christian Church. When these high objects were to be gained, then this thing of indifferency became a thing of duteous obligation; and then not only were the strong taught to bear the infirmities of the weak, but every one was taught, not to please his neighbour, but to please his neighbour for his good to edification. Thus did Paul seek to please men in all things—because "not seeking his own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved" (1 Cor. ix. 33).

Ver. 3.—'For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.' And here this matter of not eating flesh, in itself a perfect trifle, is made to rank with a virtue of the very highest order—the imitation of Christ. The quotation here given is from Psalm lxix. 9, the first part of which verse is applied by the apostle John to our Saviour; and the latter in this place by the apostle Paul. There was no pleasure in those reproaches of men, which were borne by our blessed Lord in the work of seeking after and saving them—when He endured the contradiction of sinners, and despised the shame of it. But a still more emphatic application of these words to Jesus Christ is to be found in that vicarious sacrifice which He underwent for the sins of the world—even those sins wherewith so much reproach and dishonour had been cast upon God. The burden of all this was made to fall upon the head of our blessed Saviour, who indeed took it upon Himself; and, by magnifying the law, took off indignity from the Lawgiver. Truly He pleased not Himself, when, under the heavy load of the hour and the power of darkness, His soul became exceeding sorrowful, and He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Surely if Christ thus bore the sins of the wicked, we might well bear the infirmities of the weak.

Ver. 4.—'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.' He had just quoted from the Scriptures; and, to enforce the lesson he had just drawn from them, he comes forth with a general testimony to the worth and the estimation in which these writings ought to be held. It is true, that they are only the Scriptures of the Old Testament which are here alluded to—or such as were written aforetime—or, immediately, for the instruction of those who lived many centuries back; yet, distantly and universally, for the instruction of the men of all ages. This is only one out of many places in the New Testament, where the 'Scriptures,' though but consisting then of the Hebrew sacred writings, have a power and a sufficiency ascribed to them which now-a-days we are apt to overlook. It is the illustrious testimony of Paul himself that "they are able to make us wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15). There is a glory and a virtue in these elder Scriptures, which should not be lost sight of. It were well that we made ourselves familiar with the high ascriptions given to them by the Psalmist of old;* and still better with the attestations in their favour by Him who is the Author and Finisher of our faith—as repeated by His apostles after Him, and from which we assuredly gather that they were written, not for the men of bygone periods only, but also for our admonition on whom the latter ends of the world have come.

'That we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope'—through the comfort which they directly give, and through the patience which both Scripture examples and Scripture exhortations are fitted to inspire. The connexion of hope with comfort is quite obvious—seeing that hope is the best and likeliest of all topics for ministering consolation to those who may at present have much to bear; and also of hope with patience—seeing that patience worketh experience, and experience hope. The pertinency of this whole consideration to the argument which the apostle is now holding, will appear more distinctly if we recollect, that when he asked the dissentient parties of the Church that he was addressing to give up their controversies, they were carrying their differences so far, as to refuse one another the hopes and privileges of their common salvation. There were judaizing teachers, we know, who taught that except men were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved.† And it would seem as if from the apostle's reasoning, that at least the weak brethren were apt to look on their opponents as so many reprobates who had forfeited their claims to a blissful immortality; and also that the strong brethren made too little account of the spiritual wellbeing, and so the ultimate safety of their adversaries, in this contention—wounding their consciences, and perhaps caring not although, destroyed by their meats, those disciples should perish for whom Christ died. The great object of the apostle was to convince them that the question now so keenly agitated need not affect the everlasting condition of either party; that both might alike stand unto God and be alike accepted of Him; and that, after having passed through the ordeal of the last judgment, both might be admitted to life everlasting with Him who is Lord of the dead and the living. He therefore bids them cherish both for themselves and others the hope of their common salvation—looking on each other as heirs and expectants now, and to be partakers hereafter of the same glorious inheritance, when they shall ever be at rest, and all their partial and temporary differences here will be lost and forgotten in the reign of an endless and universal charity. Here they speak, and understand, and think, as children; but there, where they shall have attained to manhood, and all shall have become strong, they will put away the childish things—the trifles of their present vain and fruitless controversy.

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* Psalms xix. cxix. &c.

† Acts xv. 1.

Ver. 5.—'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus.' 'The God of patience and consolation'—the expression varied here from comfort to consolation, though not in the original—where the reference therefore to the very terms of the last verse is all the more distinct in the ascription given to God, as the God of patience and comfort—or as the Giver of these graces, which He is, when He strengthens us "with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness" (Col. i. 11). We are here reminded of what is said of God the Father in 2 Cor. i. 3, 4—"The Father of mercies and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." The sympathy of a common hope, begetting the sense of a common interest, would, in every good and Christian mind, beget also the fellowship of a common or mutual charity, and so make them "like-minded one toward another;" and it is added, "according to Christ Jesus," or after the example of Christ Jesus—even the example which he had already quoted in the third verse. The patience and comfort, it might have been said, though from God, are nevertheless through the Scriptures—the one being the source of all our graces, the other their channel of conveyance. And the like-mindedness of this verse has certainly in it as one ingredient at least, that of which in Philippians (ii. 2), this like-mindedness is said to consist—even in having the same love, of one accord, of one mind; under the influence of which spirit nothing would be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind each would esteem other better than themselves.

Ver. 6.—But it is evident from this verse that the like-mindedness here does not lie exclusively in this fellowship of a mutual charity one for another; it points also to the common direction of their minds towards one and the same object—that object being the glory of God. They may differ in certain observances, but what he wants of them is that they shall agree in this: Let him that regardeth the day regard it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord let him not regard it. In like manner, let him who eateth, and him who eateth not, agree in giving God thanks and in giving God glory. This they should do with one mind, and he adds, with one mouth. With our mind we must think the same things, ere with our mouth we can speak the same things. Were we then more slow to speak of the things on which we differ, and more ready to speak of the things on which we agree, it would mightily conduce to the peace and unity of the visible Church. The members of the Church at Rome differed in regard both to meats and days; and Paul as good as enjoined silence about these when he bade them receive each other, but not to doubtful disputations. But, on the other hand, he bids them join with one mouth, as well as one mind, in giving glory to God. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Phil. iii. 16).

'Even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This is the peculiar aspect in which, as Christians, we regard God. Did we but view Him as the God of Natural Theology—apart from Christ and out of Christ—there might be a fearfulness toward God, but no fellowship. It is our looking to Him, and so trusting in Him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—it is this which, specifically and characteristically, marks our entrance on the religion of the gospel. Then begins our fellowship with the Father and with the Son—the best of all preparatives, according to the apostle John, for our having "fellowship one with another" (1 John i. 3, 7). And so it follows in

Ver. 7.—'Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.' He winds up his argument on this topic by re-echoing what he had said at the outset of it. He bids them receive one another, even by bearing one another. Surely if Christ made our sins no obstacle in the way of our reception, and that too at the time when we were enemies, we should make their infirmities no obstacle to the reception of those who are our brethren—weak brethren they may be; but it will make us all the liker to our Saviour, who was meek and lowly in heart, if we bear ourselves with a peculiar gentleness towards them, seeing that we are required not to strive but "to be gentle towards all men" (2 Tim. ii. 24). He had compassion on them who were out of the way; and far more grievously out of it than those erring or over-scrupulous disciples, in whose behalf and for whose indulgence Paul is now pleading. Surely if Christ adopted us into God's family, we should adopt one another into our fellowship—and 'to the glory of God' too. He effected peace on earth in the way that brought glory to God in the highest. He reconciled us sinners unto God, yet so as to exalt His authority, and make all the glories of His character stand out in brighter manifestation than ever to the eyes both of angels and of men. He received and recognised us as the children of His own Father, and so as His own brethren; but on such a footing as nevertheless redounded to the vindication and honour of the divine perfections: and it was indeed a signal triumph over difficulties insuperable to all but Him—when out of such materials as the guilty aliens of the human race, both Jews and Gentiles, He gained such large accessions to the spiritual household of the faithful. Let us not impair this household or narrow its limits—whether in reality or in our own imaginations—whether by offences, on the one hand, as when we wound the consciences of the weak, and perhaps destroy those for whom Christ died; or by our intolerant and exclusive sectarianism on the other, as when we say that without certain ceremonial observances men cannot be saved. Let us not thus defeat the sacred policy of Him who opened the door of admission for the world at large. Let Gentiles give up their contempt, and Jews give up their bigotry; and as Christ received both, let both receive one another. Let us do nothing to break off this fellowship, or to mutilate that Church by which is shown to the universe "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. iii. 10). It is therefore well added, that we should receive each other 'to the glory of God;' for it were indeed a minishing of His glory thus to abridge the extent and entireness of that great temple, the materials whereof are gathered out of all nations, and of which Christ Himself is the chief corner-stone.

Ver. 8-12.—'Now I say, that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.' As he draws towards the close of his epistle, he seems as if to redouble his strenuousness for the fulfilment of its main object—which was the establishment of a common understanding between Jews and Gentiles—a full settlement of all the unhappy differences betwixt them. To effectuate this his favourite design, on which it is obvious that his whole heart was set, he puts forth all his powers of persuasion; and he evidently feels that his chief attempt must be to soften the prejudices of the Jewish understanding, or that his most necessary, as well as hardest task, was to propitiate and reconcile the minds of his own countrymen—all whose partialities had been violently thwarted by the free admission of Gentiles into the Church, and more especially when accompanied with the indulgence of being exempted from the obligations of the ceremonial law. We can fancy as if it were in the spirit of his own characteristic policy, and to appease the wounded vanity of the Jews, that in the eighth verse he sets forth Jesus Christ Himself as being in His own person the direct minister of the circumcision—whereas afterwards he puts himself forward as being the humble minister under Christ for the conversion of the Gentiles. Certain it is that our Saviour, while on earth, very much restricted His ministrations to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But the great instrumentality employed by our apostle, and which he most wielded for gaining over the Jews, was a plentiful quotation of their own Scriptures. This was precisely what our Saviour Himself did when, to do away with another of their national antipathies, even the revolt which they all felt in the notion of a crucified Messiah—He argued from Moses and the Prophets that Christ ought to have suffered these things, expounding "in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." And thus too Paul has recourse to a scriptural demonstration, and brings both psalms and prophecies to witness that the truth of God was as much committed to the admission of the Gentiles within the pale of gospel mercy, as to the fulfilment of the promises made on behalf of the Jews in the ears of those patriarchs from whom they had descended.

Ver. 13.—'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Having thus merged the distinction between these two classes, he makes them both the objects of a common invocation—and this is one of the most pregnant and precious verses of the Bible. The God whom he thus calls upon is designed by him 'the God of hope'—just because He is the author of this grace, making us to 'abound in hope'—even as a little before He is called the God of patience and comfort, because He works in us these graces also—strengthening us "with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."

There are certain weighty lessons enveloped in the brief but emphatic sentence now before us, and some of which we shall slightly touch upon.

Our first remark is founded on the comparison of the fourth and thirteenth verse, whence we are made to perceive the identity of that effect which is ascribed to the Scriptures on the one hand, and to the Holy Ghost upon the other. In the first of these the apostle directs the attention of his disciples to the things 'which were written aforetime,' that through the Scriptures they might have hope; in the second he prays for the same disciples, that they 'may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' The respective functions of the Word and Spirit are thus brought into view, and more especially this important truth—that, though perfectly distinct from each other, their joint operation on the soul of man issues not in two different results, but in one and the same result. The reason is, that the one is the agent and the other the instrument of one and the same service: and so the word of God is called "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. vi. 17). It is that which He works by. When He enlightens, it is by opening the understanding to understand the Scriptures; and when He impresses, it is by giving the influence and power of moral suasion to the lessons of Scripture. It might help perhaps to alleviate the mysteriousness of certain passages in the Bible, if we understand the comparing of spiritual things with spiritual, to be the comparing of scriptural things with scriptural, and the things of the Spirit were regarded as the things of Scripture spiritually discerned. We should then be at no loss to harmonize the saying, that we are born again "of the Spirit" (John iii. 3, 5), with the saying that we are born again "by the word of God" (1 Pet. i. 23). And as both co-operate in the work of our regeneration, so both co-operate in the production of each special grace that belongs to the new creature in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The joy and peace here spoken of are both to be understood subjectively, or in the sense of mental affections, wherewith it is the prayer of the apostle that his disciples should be filled. It is not the joy which there is in heaven over a sinner that repenteth, but the joy felt by the sinner himself when he comes to have the faith of the gospel. Neither is it the peace which there is in the heart of the Godhead towards us, when, on our acceptance of His Son as our Saviour, His purposes of wrath and vengeance against us are turned away. But it is the peace which enters our own hearts, when, visited by the sense of forgiveness, or by the conviction that God hath ceased from His anger, we cease from all our disquietudes because of it. And more than this. Not only are we relieved from the terrors of a coming vengeance, but also from those sensations of disquietude which might else have agonized us, amid the vexations or vicissitudes of the life that soon passeth away. Because of the glorious prospect beyond it, we are calm—even when beset with tribulation; or are not troubled as other men. This peace of our text is of a more negative character than the joy of our text, yet it too admits of degrees—the strength of it being rightly estimated by the magnitude of those trials under which we maintain the serenity of our spirits notwithstanding. In the world our Saviour tells us we shall have tribulation; but in Him we shall have peace: and, as a proof that it admits of being increased and strengthened, it is said in one place to be a peace so great that it passeth all understanding; and it is spoken of by Isaiah as the privilege of God's reconciled children, that they will delight greatly in the abundance of their peace—a peace of such depth and stability, that it is conceived of by the same prophet as flowing through the heart like a mighty river, the surface of which may be ruffled by the passing wind that blows over it, while all is stillness, all is tranquil and beyond the reach of disturbance within and below.

There is as great a complexional variety in the experience of Christians as there is in the natural temperaments of men. It is because of this constitutional difference, that while the faith of the gospel works joy in the heart of one man, it works peace in another. And so we read of deathbeds of ecstacy, and also of deathbeds of calm and settled assurance—the latter evincing, it is possible, as strong a degree of faith, though unaccompanied by the raptures of a lively and overpowering manifestation.

And what is worthy of our special notice is, that both the joy and the peace may be felt in the direct exercise of believing. They may flow, and flow immediately, from the faith of the gospel, without aught to intervene between them. Those would throw a sad obscuration on the freeness of the gospel, and greatly embarrass the outset of an inquirer who is groping for an entrance on the way of salvation, who insist that ere joy or peace can be felt there must be some subjective ground of experience on which to sustain it. There can be no doubt that the subjective in Christianity does minister both joy and peace to the believer —as when Paul rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience; and John could tell that when his heart condemned him not, then had he confidence towards God. But when one principle is admitted, must it always be at this expense—the exclusion or extinction of another equally legitimate, and equally indispensable to the Christian state and the Christian character? There are a peace and a joy in the subjective—or on our finding what good things have been worked in us by the Spirit of God. But distinct from this, and I should say anterior to this, there are also a peace and a joy in the objective—or on our believing what good things have been spoken to us by the word of God, and to be felt immediately on our giving credence to them,—a peace and a joy which emanate directly from the sayings of Scripture; and such sayings too as are addressed not to disciples only, but to yet unconverted sinners also. Would not the man whom we had injured, and of whom we had good reason to be afraid, did he stand before us with an angry or menacing countenance— would not he be the object of our dread and disquietude, and this simply on our view of the objective? And on the other hand, did his countenance bespeak a readiness for peace and pardon, would not terror give way to confidence, and that simply too on our view of the objective? And does the Lawgiver make no such exhibition of Himself in the gospel of Jesus Christ, when He looks compassion on the children of men, or sets forth His own Son as the propitiation for the sins of the world? But there are sounds as well as sights of encouragement, words which are the direct bearers of comfort to the soul, a proclamation of amnesty as well as a flag of amnesty; and which, as coming from without, are objective things external to ourselves, and, apart from ourselves, fitted to light up an immediate gladness in our bosoms, did we but open our eyes or our ears to them—as surely as when the wise men from the east saw the star over Bethlehem, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; or as surely as the shepherds who first heard the proclamation of good-will from the sky, and saw the babe in the manger, glorified and praised God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. We cannot well imagine how any tidings should be designated tidings of great joy—unless they had the property of making joyful, simply and immediately on our believing them—and this without any thought bestowed upon ourselves, or subjective regards cast downwardly or inwardly on our own spirit, or on the state of our own hearts and characters. It is thus that there are a peace and joy in believing what we read of God, and of God in Christ, in our Bibles—as when He swears by Himself that He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that all should come unto Him and live; or beseeches us to enter into reconciliation; or assures us that whosoever cometh unto His Son shall in no wise be cast out; and that if we so come, our sins, though as crimson, should become as wool, though as scarlet, should be made whiter than the snow. The ministers of the gospel are the heralds of a universal proclamation—a proclamation of mercy, in the believing of which there are instant peace and joy.

But neither would we exclude the subjective as being a ground of peace and joy also: nay, we will admit that there must be a certain harmony between the objective and the subjective at the very outset of our Christianity. The same heavenly Teacher and Saviour who says, Come unto me all and I will receive you, says also, He who cometh unto me must forsake all. There are here both an invitation and a declaration. I cannot imagine, notwithstanding the perfect fulness and freeness of the one, how any man could come confidently or rejoice in the faith, if in the face of the other, he was not honestly desirous of forsaking all sin, and making an entire surrender of himself to the will of Christ. If at all conscious of this reservation or of this duplicity, it will make him incapable of clearly or confidently believing—or in other words, an evil conscience will darken faith. But this does not preclude the importance, nay even the necessity, of setting forth in full presentation before the eye of the mind the objective truths of Christianity, the objects that faith must have to rest upon; and the fruit of this on all truly earnest inquirers, or in other words, on all good and honest hearts, will be peace and joy; and this whether they be looking inwardly on their hearts or not. Nay, you must give them time to look outwardly on the tidings from heaven ere they can rejoice; and in virtue of their hearts being good and honest (a goodness and honesty which abide, and stand them in stead, even when they are not looking inwardly)—in virtue of this singleness of eye, and singleness of purpose, will their whole bodies be full of light (Matt. vi. 22, 23); and they will see clearly outward these objects of vision, because within them there is a clear medium of vision. And there is a counterpart to this in them who want singleness of eye, or whose hearts are full of duplicity, and so of darkness (Matt. vi. 23); and to whom therefore the objects of faith, bereft of all luminousness, might be preached or presented—but in vain. Still it is our duty to preach at a venture—that to the good and honest it may be the savour of life unto life, although it should be the savour of death unto death to all other hearers. In the simple exercise of believing they will have hope—the hope is yet of faith only, and not till afterwards the hope of experience. But the stronger the faith is, and the hope founded upon it, the brighter will the experience be, and the hope also which is founded upon it. These two will work like conspiring influences, which keep pace together, and work into each other's hands. For the more vigorous the faith, the more vigorous also will be the obedience. The faith and the good conscience will thus grow with each other's growth, and strengthen with each other's strength—whereas if we cast away our good conscience, of our faith we shall make shipwreck.

And it is the Holy Ghost who causeth us to abound in both—in the hope that cometh directly from the objective, by taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto us; and in the hope that cometh reflexly from the subjective, by working in us those personal graces, whence men take knowledge of us, and we may also take knowledge of ourselves, that we are indeed the disciples of Jesus. He is alike the author of the hope that springs from the inherent, and of the hope that springs from the imputed righteousness—of the one when experience worketh hope, by the love of God being "shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost given to us" (Rom. v. 5); of the other, when through the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

LECTURE XCIX.

ROMANS XV. 14-33.

"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

VER. 14.—Paul, in drawing towards the close of his epistle, seems, with the characteristic delicacy which breaks forth in many other passages, to feel that he must apologize for the freedom of his exhortations. The likest thing to it in any of the other apostles is, when Peter tells the disciples to whom he writes, that he addresses them, not to inform as if they were ignorant persons, but to stir up their pure minds in the way of remembrance—and this though they already knew the things of which he was reminding them, and though they were established in the present truth.* And so Paul, as if to soften the effect of his dictations—and this though his manner was the farthest possible from that of a dictator—tells his converts of his persuasion that they were filled with knowledge and goodness; and that though he took it upon him to admonish them, he was sure nevertheless that they were able to admonish one another. The truth is, that neither the greatest knowledge nor the greatest goodness supersedes the necessity of our being often told the same things over again. Men may thoroughly know their duty, and yet stand constantly in need to be reminded of their duty. The great use of moral suasion is not that thereby people should be made to know, but should be led to consider. And thus our Sabbaths and other seasons of periodical instruction, are of the greatest possible service, although there should be no dealing in novelties at all—though but to recall the sacred truths which are apt to be forgotten, and renew the good impressions which might else be dissipated among the urgencies of the world. Whether then an apostle should write, or a minister should substantially present the same things, it ought not to be grievous, because it is safe.† He speaks but as the helper of his congregation, and not as having dominion over them.‡ He is but an instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit, whose office it is not merely to teach what is new, but to recall what is old—to bring all things to remembrance.§ It is true that they may already have received the gospel, and that in the gospel they stand; yet they shall have believed in vain, unless they keep in memory that which has been preached unto them.‖ In keeping with this, Paul says in the fifteenth verse, that he writes not to inform but to put in mind.

Ver. 15, 16.—'Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.' Still further to conciliate their toleration for his advices, he tells them of the large warrant that he had received from God Himself, and by which he was fully authorized to act the part of their instructor. Instead of being dissatisfied, they might well have felt most grateful for the distinction conferred on them by the message of an ambassador invested with such powers and credentials from heaven. At the same time, the special designation of himself, which he here intimates, of Apostle to the Gentiles, while it excused the liberties which he took with them, might help to mitigate the discontent of his other and more impracticable disciples the Jews—inasmuch as it explained and justified his peculiar zeal for their privilege of exemption from the servitudes of the Mosaic ritual in behalf of those who had been given to him as his own peculiar charge. That he had the Jews in his eye, and was still laying himself out to propitiate their favour, seems probable from the sacrificial style in which he describes the service that had been put into his hands. He represents himself as the minister (λειτουργος) of Christ—in which office he does the work of a priest (ἱερουργῶν) with the gospel,—his offering (προσφορα) being the Gentile converts, who, anointed by the Holy Ghost, were made acceptable thereby, even as the meat-offering of the Jews, which had oil and frankincense poured upon it, arose with a sweet savour unto the Lord.

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* 2 Pet. i. 12-14; iii. 1.

† Phil. iii. 1.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 24.

§ John xiv. 26.

‖ 1 Cor. xv. 2.

Ver. 17.—'I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.' Paul's object in glorying was not to magnify himself, but to constrain a willing and wholesome submission to the lessons which He gave forth in his capacity as steward of Heaven's high mysteries. His glorying was all through Jesus Christ; and the things of which he was the dispenser did not pertain to him but to God. His functions were wholly ministerial; and nothing can exceed the perfect humility as well as wisdom wherewith he discharged them. All that he arrogated to himself was the office of a servant, though it was a service so honourable and so signalized, as would above measure and unduly have exalted many other men.

Ver. 18, 19.—'For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.' There is a peculiarity in the mode of expression here, which may perhaps be ascribed to the sensitive repugnance of our apostle to aught like the assumption of superiority over other men. There can be no doubt that he was pre-eminently, though not exclusively, the apostle of the

Gentiles—yet he will not say that he will dare to speak of the things which Christ had done by him, but that he will not dare to speak of the things which Christ had not done by him—thus modestly recognising the contribution of other men's labours in a cause where he himself had been the chief labourer, and far the most powerful instrument in the hand of God for its success and advancement in the world. This could not be disguised—so that after leading his readers to understand that there were others who shared along with him in the great achievement of making the Gentiles obedient through mighty signs and wonders, and leaving them to imagine how great this share might be, he could not avoid the direct statement of his own apostolical work, in that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel of Christ.

'Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God.' It is not likely that Paul would have made mention at all of these miracles, had they not been wrought at Rome as well as in other places along his apostolical tour, where churches had been planted by him. At all events, he, in epistles to other churches, does appeal to the miracles which had been wrought in the midst of them. For example, in the free and fearless remonstrance which he held with the Galatians, he puts the question with all boldness—"O foolish Galatians! . . . he that ministereth to you the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. iii. 1, 5.) And in the enumeration which he makes of the powers conferred on various of the Church office-bearers, he tells the Corinthians that to one is given by the Spirit of God the working of miracles; and, more specifically still, "to another the gifts of healing, and to another divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10); and again, in another epistle to the same people, he says—"Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. xii. 12). In this respect he tells them that they were not inferior to other churches; nor is it probable that he would have written of these miracles to his converts at Rome, had they been in this state of inferiority to others.

There cannot then be imagined a more satisfactory historical evidence for these high and undoubted credentials of a divine mission, then we are able to adduce for the miracles which abounded in the primitive churches, and for those in particular which were worked by Paul's own hands. He indeed, in common with the other apostles, possessed the endowment in a degree that might be called transcendental—insomuch as, besides having the gift of miracles, they had the power, by the laying on of their hands, of conferring this gift upon others.* Now whatever exhibition might have been made of such things at Rome, certain it is that for miracles both at Corinth and in Galatia, we have testimony in such a form as makes it quite irresistible. Here we have, in the custody of these two churches from the earliest times, the epistles which they had received from Paul—the original documents having been long in their own possession, while copies of them were speedily multiplied and diffused over the whole Christian world. In these records do we find Paul, in vindication of his own apostleship, and in the course of a severe reckoning with the people whom he addresses, making a confident appeal to the miracles which had been wrought before their eyes. Had there been imposture here, the members of these two churches would not have lent their aid to uphold it. They would not have professed the faith which they did on pretensions which they knew to be false, and that for the support of a claim to divine authority now brought to bear in remonstrance and rebuke against themselves. We might multiply at pleasure our suspicions of Paul, and conjure up all sorts of imaginations against him; but no possible explanation can be found for the acquiescence of his converts in the treachery of the apostle—or rather, of their becoming parties to his fabrication, if fabrication indeed it was. One can fancy an interest which he might have in a scheme of deception; but what earthly interest can we assign for the part which they took in the deception, knowing it to be so? Or on what other hypothesis than the irresistible truth of these miracles can we explain their adherence to the gospel, and that in the face of losses and persecutions—nay, even of cruel martyrdoms; but over and above all this, the taunts and cutting reproaches, to the bargain, of the very man who could tell them of the miracles which themselves had seen, as the vouchers of his embassy from God; and threatened, if necessary, to come amongst them with a rod, and make demonstration in the midst of them of his authority and power? Had there been deceit and jugglery in the matter why did they not let out the secret, and rid themselves at once and for ever of this burdensome visitation? The truth is, that the overpowering evidence from without, and their own consciences from within, would not let them. There is no other historical evidence which in clearness and certainty comes near to this. And whether we look to the integrity of these original witnesses, men faithful and tried, or to the abundant and continuous and closely sustained testimony which flowed downward in well-filled vehicles from the first age of the apostles—we are compelled to acknowledge a sureness and a stamp of authenticity in the miracles of the gospel, not only unsurpassed but unequalled by any other events, the knowledge of which has been transmitted from ancient to modern times.

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* Acts viii. 18, &c.

Ver. 20, 21.—'Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: but, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.' Not that Paul would have withheld the benefit of his instructions from those who were already Christians if they came in his way; but what he strove for and sought after, was to enter on altogether new ground, deeming it more his vocation to extend and spread abroad Christianity, by the planting of new churches, than to build up or perfect the churches which had been already founded. There seems to have been an emulation in these days among the first teachers of the gospel, which betokens that even they were not altogether free from the leaven which Paul had detected in his own converts, when he charged them with being "yet carnal" (1 Cor. iii. 4). There was something amongst them like a vain-glorious rivalship in the work of proselytizing—insomuch that the credit of their respective shares in the formation of a Christian Church was a matter of competition and jealousy. Our apostle wanted to keep altogether clear of this, and to be wholly aloof from the temptation of it—as indeed he himself intimates in 2 Cor. x. 15, 16, where he tells us that he would not boast of other men's labours, or in another man's line of things made ready to his hand. Certain it is, that while he refrained from building on another man's foundation, he experienced no little disturbance from other men building on the foundation which he himself had laid—and these not only the false teachers, but even men who were true at bottom—yet would, like Peter at Antioch, have laid some of their wood and hay and stubble thereupon.

The prophet from whom Paul here quotes had the Gentiles chiefly in his eye; and to be their apostle was his peculiar destination (Acts xxii. 21). This, however, was not a mere arbitrary appointment, for we read that he was chosen to this office, because of his peculiar qualifications. He was a wise master-builder (ἀρχιτεκτων) who could lay well the foundation.* He had the talent beyond other men to begin at the beginning—or to lay down what he himself calls the *principles* (ἀρχη) of the doctrine of Christ.† No one could excel him in the admirable skill wherewith he made his first outset, when reasoning with those to whom the doctrine of Christ was as yet a perfect novelty; and such being his *forte*, if we may thus express ourselves on such a subject, we cannot wonder that it was also his favourite walk to speak unto those who had not yet seen or heard the truth, and address himself to those who had no previous notice or understanding of it. We meet with manifold traces of this distinct and distinguishing power in our great apostle—the power of taking up a right vantage-ground whence to date his argument, or on which to rear his demonstration in behalf of the gospel. We can discern the faculty of which we now speak in his speech before Agrippa, and his address to the people of Athens. But it was a faculty which availed him in his converse with Jews as well as Gentiles—the former in fact often standing at as great, and in some respects a greater distance than the latter from the first rudiments, or as he himself terms it, the first principles of the oracles of God. It is obvious that thus to commence aright with any one, respect must be had to his special state or habitudes of mind—so as to fit in the initial consideration with the initial prejudices or tendencies of those whom he was addressing. We have repeated exhibitions of this in the history of Paul—of the judgment wherewith he took a right point of departure, or set up a right starting-post, when his object was to find an access and an acceptance into the minds of men for the truth of Christianity—as with idolaters, when he reasoned with them out of their own superstition; or with scholars, when he reasoned with them out of their own literature;‡ or with Pharisees, when he reasoned with them from the tenets of their own sect;§ or with Israelites in general, when he reasoned with them out of their own Scriptures. But the amplest memorials of this rare and remarkable gift, in the most gifted of all the apostles, are his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and most of all his Epistle to the Hebrews—in all of which he lays himself out more expressly, it is true, for the Jewish understanding; but in that way of skilful opening, as well as skilful adaptation and approach, which showed that he stood the highest of all his colleagues as an accomplished tactician in the warfare of minds—or who best knew how he should address himself to this work of laying siege, as it were, to men's understandings, and this for the achievement of a victory over them—and so could be all things to all men, that he might gain some. No wonder then that his delight and his preference was to put himself to the task he was best fitted for—whether to make a first encounter with Jewish prejudices, or as a pioneer in the wilderness of heathenism. To express it otherwise, if there was one stage in the process of the spiritual manufacture which he liked better to deal with than another, it seems to have been the first stage of it; when he had to deal with raw material, or with minds in the greatest possible state of rudeness and alienation from the gospel of Jesus Christ—whether by grossest ignorance, as with barbarians; or by contempt and bigotry, as with Jews upon the one hand, and still unconverted Greeks upon the other.

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* 1 Cor. iii. 10.

† Heb. vi. 1.

‡ Acts xvii.

§ Acts xxiii. 6.

Ver. 22-24.—'For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.' It is obvious, that in the multitude of such engagements, he could not be so frequent in his attentions or visits to the churches that had been already formed. And it is accordingly on this ground that he apologizes for his lengthened absence from the Christians at Rome. 'For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.' He had a great desire for many years to make out a visit, and states this in the next verse, in order that they might accept of the will for the deed. He pleads the hindrance of his incessant occupation in those regions where Christ had not been before named, and it is interesting to note what it was that released him from this hindrance. It was because that now he had 'no more place in these parts.' Paul might come to know, by a direct intimation from the Spirit, that God had no more work to do in these parts—even as we read in the book of Acts of his being bidden go to some places, and restrained or hindered from others.* It is not to be supposed that Paul filled up the various regions which he had visited with the preaching of the gospel—though he might have left a Church in each of the larger towns, as a centre of emanation whence others might propagate the religion of Jesus Christ through the countries around them. And even where he preached with little or no success, he might be said to have no more place in that part—no more, for example, at Athens, although he left it a mass of nearly unalleviated darkness—just as our Lord's immediate apostles might well be said to have no more place in those towns that rejected their testimony, and against which they were called to shake off the dust of their feet, and then to take their departure—fleeing from the cities which either refused or persecuted them, and turning to others. The way in fact of apostles or ministers, the outward instruments in the teaching of Christianity, is the same with the way of the Spirit, who is the real agent in this teaching by giving to their word all its efficacy. He may visit every man, but withdraws Himself from those who resist Him—just as the missionaries of the gospel might visit every place, and have fulfilled their work even in those places where the gospel has been put to scorn, and so become the savour of death unto death to the people who live in them. Yet we must not slacken in our endeavours for the evangelization of the whole earth, although the only effect should be that the gospel will be preached unto all nations for a witness, and the success of the enterprise will be limited by the gathering of the elect from the four corners of heaven.

It is a matter of unsettled controversy whether Paul ever was in Spain, or was able to fulfil his purpose of a free and voluntary journey to Rome—his only recorded journey there being when taken up as a prisoner in chains. At the beginning of the epistle he tells them of his prayer; and here expresses his hope of again seeing them in circumstances of prosperity, when, after a full and satisfactory enjoyment of their society, he might be helped forward by them on his way to the country beyond. Let me here notice in passing, how accordant the movements both of Paul beyond Judea, and of our Saviour and the apostles within its limits as described in the Gospels and Acts, are with the abiding geography of towns and countries still before our eyes. It is in itself a pleasing exercise to trace this harmony of Scripture with the known bearings and distances of places still, and even serves the purpose of confirmation as a monumental evidence of the truth of Christianity.

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* Acts xvi. 6, 7; xviii. 9, 10; xix. 21.

Ver. 25-27.—'But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.' Paul however had an intermediate duty to perform ere he could fulfil his purpose of a journey to Rome. He had to go to Jerusalem with the produce of the charities of the faithful gathered in Macedonia and Achaia for the necessities of the poor and persecuted Christians in Jerusalem. This very collection is referred to in several other places;* and the comparison of scripture with scripture is also a pleasing and confirmatory exercise. This was not the first time that such an exertion of liberality had been made for the destitute brethren in Judea, as we read in Acts xi. 30; xii. 25. The truth is, that the Jewish were sooner the objects of persecution than the Gentile Christians—the effects of which seem to have been first felt by the lower classes—deprived in all likelihood of their custom and employment, in consequence of the ill-will conceived against them by those on whom they wont to depend for the means of their subsistence. It was for their relief that the wealthier converts who were beyond the reach of any immediate suffering from this cause made the generous surrender of all their property.† This resource appears to have been at length exhausted, when the appeal in their favour was at length carried abroad over the Christian world at large. The charity at home, however, nobly did its part, ere the charity at a distance was called for or drawn upon.

'And their debtors they are.' He here accredits the Jewish Christians generally and nationally, as being the dispensers of the gospel to the Gentiles, though properly they were but the teachers and apostles who came forth of Jerusalem that were entitled to the honour of this consideration, and to a grateful return because of it. It is in this more proper and restricted sense that he pleads for the right both of himself and Barnabas to a livelihood from the Church at Corinth.‡ But it is not unnatural when any signal benefit has been conferred by the members of a certain community, to feel as if an acknowledgment were due on that account to the whole collective body of whom they form a part; and Paul avails himself of this disposition when pleading for the poor saints of Jerusalem, because of the blessings which had emanated from Jerusalem on all the churches, though the great majority of these poor saints had personally no hand in them. It were well if we of the present day felt similarly to this. It is true that they are not the Jews who are now in the world to whom we owe our spiritual privileges as Christians; but still let us indulge the thought of a gratitude being due to them, because of the mighty benefits that we have received from their ancestors, from men of their nation in other days, from the prophets and apostles of old, who bequeathed to us the oracles of God; and who in dispensing the word of life among the nations, were chief instruments for the fulfilment at length of the promise made to their great ancestor—that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. It is a reproach to Christians that this consideration has not operated more powerfully in favour of the Jewish people, so as to have made them the objects of a far higher benevolence, both in things spiritual and temporal, than they have ever yet experienced at our hands.

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* 2 Cor. viii. 4; ix. 13. † Acts iv. 34-37. ‡ 1 Cor. ix.

'For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.' The comparison in respect of magnitude and worth between spiritual and carnal things, is still more distinctly made in 1 Cor. ix. 11, where the apostle speaks of the right which he and Barnabas had earned to a maintenance from their hands. In this matter too there is great room for the condemnation of professing Christians, because of their gross practical insensibility to the rule of equity here laid down—and which is strikingly evinced throughout Protestant countries in particular, by the extreme feebleness and defect of the voluntary principle for the support of ministers of religion. It is in virtue of this that the instructors even of large and opulent congregations have often so pitiful and parsimonious an allowance doled out to them; and if so wretched a proportion of their own carnal things be given in return for spiritual things to themselves, we are not to wonder at the still more paltry and inadequate contributions which are made by them for the spiritual things of others. The expense of all missionary schemes and enterprises put together—a mere scantling of the wealth of all Christendom, argues it to be still a day of exceeding small things—a lesson still more forcibly held out to us by the thousands and tens of thousands at our own doors who are perishing for lack of knowledge. There is a carnal as well as a spiritual benevolence. That the carnal benevolence makes some respectable head against the carnal selfishness of our nature is evinced by the fact, that so very few are ever known to die of actual starvation. That the spiritual benevolence falls miserably behind the other, is evinced by the fact of those millions and millions more in our empire, who, purely from want of the churches which ought to be built, and of ministers who ought to be maintained for them, are left to wander all their days beyond the pale of gospel ordinances—and so to live in guilt and die in utter darkness. Verily in such a contemplation, it might well be said even of this professing age—Are ye not yet altogether carnal?

Ver. 28.—'When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.' To 'seal' here means to make sure or to consummate. When I am conclusively done with this business, when I have brought the fruit of Christian liberality which has been put into my hands to Jerusalem, and delivered it to the apostles there for distribution among the poor saints—then will I come by you into Spain.

Ver. 29.—'And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.' There are manuscripts in which the word for 'gospel' is omitted, and where nevertheless a complete sense is retained—'I am sure that when I do come, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of Christ.' Of this one thing, or main thing, he was sure; but there are certain other things of detail and circumstance in this whole anticipation of which he is not so sure. In ch. i. 10, 11, he speaks of his prosperous journey to Rome as but a prayer and a thing of longing desirousness; in ch. i. 15, of his preaching there as but a purpose; in ch. xv. 23, of his future visit to them as an earnest wish; in ch. xv. 24, of his journey to Spain as being yet a contingency, and his seeing the Church at Rome in his way as no more than a confident expectation; lastly, of his coming to them on his road to Spain as a determination; and to crown all, as a certainty and absolute certainty—that when he did come, or if he should come, he would come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, or blessing of Him who was the Author and Finisher of the gospel. It marks most strikingly the shortsightedness of men, even of men inspired on certain occasions and for certain purposes, as contrasted with the counsel of that God which alone shall stand—it most emphatically tells of His ways as not being our ways—that the hopes, nay the prayers of an apostle, reinforced by the prayers which he requested from his people for a prosperous journey to Rome, were all frustrated—so that, instead of a joyful procession to his friends in the world's metropolis, he came to them as a criminal in fetters, a captive in the hands of unbelievers. It is thus that the things of which he was only hopeful or desirous were disposed of; but the thing of which he felt assured had its fixed accomplishment. He did come to Rome fully charged with spiritual blessings, and which he fully and freely delivered to the people there. "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him; preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Ver. 30-33.—'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.' He seems to make appeal here to that love in their hearts which the Spirit worketh—the love more especially which Christians, who have passed from death unto life, bear in their hearts for each other; and under the promptings of which it behoved them to pray for the safety of him who was their spiritual father. His request for such a prayer implies a sense of danger in the mind of the apostle—an apprehension fully warranted by his knowledge of the deadly hatred borne him by the Jews, and against which he in this very journey took the precaution mentioned in Acts xx. 3. It is perhaps not so easy to explain why he should stand in any doubt of his service being accepted by the saints at Jerusalem. But many of them too were jealous, and did not like his partiality for the Gentiles—nay, it was possible might have disdained the receiving of any charity at their hands. On this matter, therefore, as on every other, he desired to relieve his carefulness by "making his requests known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6)—both from his own mouth and through the mouths of his interceding brethren. It is worthy of being noted that the next object—his coming unto them with joy—he asks to be prayed for with a submissive reference to the will of God. It may be regarded as the sample of a conditional as distinguished from an absolute prayer. We know of certain things which expressly and at all times are agreeable to the will of God, and for these we might pray without any qualification—as for our knowledge of the truth, and our growth in the divine life, and our final salvation, and generally for all spiritual blessings. For temporal blessings we might pray also; but with the exception of daily bread, and things absolutely needful for the life and the body, respecting which we have the declared will and promise of God—for all other blessings of an earthly description we should pray with a salvo, laying our wants and wishes before God, while subjecting them withal to God's good pleasure. The things of this class when prayed for, may or may not be conceded to us; but at all events, as the fruit of this believing intercourse with Heaven, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 6, 7)—even that peace which is the subject of the apostle's closing benediction, and of which no tribulations or adversities can deprive us.* And therefore with an unfaltering Amen could he pray—'The God of peace be with you all.'

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* John xvi. 33.

LECTURE C.

ROMANS XVI.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: (who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles) Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epenetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you. Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Timotheus my work-fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus, the chamberlain of the city, saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, (according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith;) to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

THIS whole chapter, filled with the salutations of respect and cordiality—not only from Paul direct to his correspondents, but from the friends and companions who were with Paul to those whom he was addressing, evinces how much Christianity is fitted to promote the interchange of such feelings between man and man. We are here presented with the forms and homages of our own modern politeness, animated by the spirit and sincerity of the gospel—forms which, though in themselves but the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision, are yet befitting vehicles for the best and highest of our mutual affections, after that the breath of life has been infused into them. Altogether we hold this chapter to be a singularly valuable document—as proving how capable the usages of a Christian Church are of being amalgamated with the graces, and the amenities, and the complimentary expressions of the every-day intercourse that takes place in general society.

Ver. 1, 2.—'I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.' And here too we are presented with another most useful indication—the employment of female agency, under the eye and with the sanction of an apostle, in the business of a church. It is well to have inspired authority for a practice too little known and too little proceeded on in modern times. Phebe belonged to the order of deaconesses—in which capacity she had been the helper of many, including Paul himself. In what respect she served them is not particularly specified. Like the women in the Gospels* who waited upon our Saviour, she may have ministered to them of her substance—though there can be little doubt, that as the holder of an official station in the Church, she ministered to them of her services also. They to whom she was commended by Paul were to receive her as becometh saints, or with all that respect and delicacy which were due to a Christian female; and also to render her all that assistance which her business, not here specified, might require at their hands.

Ver. 3, 4.—'Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus; who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.' Aquila and Priscilla must at this time have been at Rome. They had formerly been at Corinth, where Paul was their guest, and then at Ephesus, whither they accompanied Paul, and where he left them†—to which place they afterwards returned, if we may conclude from the salutation sent to them from Rome by Paul, in his letter to Timothy,‡ when he was bishop of the Ephesians. Both at Corinth and Ephesus they had been the helpers of Paul in Christ Jesus—his helpers, we presume, chiefly in things temporal—at least not in spiritual things, as they had been to Apollos, when they expounded to him the way of God more perfectly. Our great apostle did not require this at their hands—yet may they have been of most important use to him even as the .ministers of holy things, in refreshing and confirming the souls of his disciples. And here it should be remarked, that Priscilla, the wife of Aquila, is joined to him in this work, seeing they are both represented in the book of Acts as contributing to the further instruction of Apollos, even after that he had signalized himself by his might in the Scriptures, and his eloquence in speaking the things of the Lord. Much more then might she be qualified to officiate as a teacher of her own sex, and more particularly of children. We cannot think then that the service of females in the Christian Church was restricted to the mere office of deaconesses, who ministered to the sick and the destitute: they also laboured in a higher vocation, and should be enlisted still in the business of a parish, as most invaluable auxiliaries in dispensing both religious comfort and religious instruction, within such spheres as might with all fitness and propriety be assigned to them. In particular, they will be found the most efficient of all civilizers among the families of a now outlandish, because heretofore neglected population—and this whether as the visitors of sewing and reading, or as themselves the teachers of Sabbath-schools; or in the former capacity as the patronesses of week-day and common, and in the latter the direct agents of Christian education.

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* Luke viii. 2, 3.
† Acts xviii. 18, 19.
‡ 2 Tim. iv. 19.

It appears that Aquila and Priscilla had exposed their own lives to jeopardy for the safety of Paul's. The special occasion on which this took place is not certainly known. There is abundant evidence of their having both had a will to have braved this hazard at any time for the sake of their beloved apostle. And we can be at no loss to imagine a way in which this might have been brought to the proof, when we read of the insurrection at Corinth against Paul,* where Aquila and Priscilla both were, and whence they accompanied him to Ephesus, where they probably were also, at the time when such a fearful outbreak was made upon him in that city by a riotous and enraged multitude. Whatever the occasion was on which they thus signalized themselves, it must have been some signal deliverance or service to Paul of which they were the instruments, that called forth so memorable an expression of gratitude, not alone from Paul individually, but probably and with open manifestation from all the churches.

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* Acts xviii. 12-18.

Ver. 5-15.—'Likewise greet the church that is in their house.' It would appear from this, that in these days Christian congregations met and had their religious services done to them in dwelling-houses. It was the practice for Aquila and Priscilla to have a church in their house elsewhere too—as here in Rome, and also in Asia, whence Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, and sends the church there a salutation from the church held in the house of these devoted followers of our Lord (1 Cor. xvi. 19). We have traces of the same practice in other places of the New Testament. "Salute Nymphas and the church which is in his house" (Col. iv. 15). "Paul unto Philemon, and to the church in thy house" (Phile. 1, 2).

Then follows a list of salutations, in the course of which some brief notices are given as if casually and incidentally, yet which are by no means devoid of interest. As when he salutes Epenetus, he signalizes him by an epithet—*well*-beloved—which marks him out as an object of the apostle's special and superlative affection. It is like the love which one has for a first-born—he having been the first of Paul's spiritual children in Achaia. It is true that the house of Stephanas is elsewhere termed "the first-fruits of Achaia" (1 Cor. xvi. 15). It is possible that Epenetus may have been of the household of Stephanas, or at all events may have been converted at the same time, or at the time of the first conversion which took place in Achaia under Paul's ministry. Some critics find an explanation in the circumstance that there are Greek manuscripts which present us with "Asia" instead of Achaia.

We also gather from this enumeration additional evidence for the agency of females in these days—as of Mary, who bestowed much labour—as well as Tryphena and Tryphosa, who laboured—and Persis, who laboured much in the Lord. This may have been the labour of mere deaconship—as that of Stephanas was at the time when he was the bearer of a supply for the apostle's wants, and of whose family it is said that they addicted themselves to the ministry (διακονια) of the saints. It may however have been more than this—a ministration in spiritual as well as temporal good things. The passage before us scarcely allows of any specific determination on this point. To labour *in the Lord* gives no decision. To assist the disciples of Christ in things necessary for the present life is part of that labour in the Lord which shall not be in vain. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We may here add, that in the sixth verse there occurs a variation of reading—some manuscripts bearing that Mary bestowed much labour 'among you,' instead of 'on us.' That is, she may have been helpful to the members of the Church, whether spiritually or temporally; or in the latter of these two senses, may have been helpful to Paul himself.

Ver. 7.—We have no taste for ascertaining that which the Bible has left uncertain, and on which ecclesiastical antiquity throws no light whatever. Why supersaturate the world with conjectures on matters which have no ground of evidence to stand upon?—as whether Andronicus and Junia were man and wife; whether Junia was not Julia, or if she was a woman at all; whether they were claimed by Paul as of kin to himself, because Israelites, or because of still nearer affinity; whether they were of note among the apostles, because being converted before Paul, they might have been of the seventy disciples; and lastly, what was the occasion of their imprisonment along with the apostle. Enough for us the generalities of Scripture, which are at the same time of themselves sufficiently interesting.

Ver. 8.—'Beloved in the Lord.' This expression denotes a purely spiritual relationship, as distinguished from the natural relationship adverted to in the preceding verse. The two verses together suggest the two distinct grounds on which one might be the object of affection. Both might be united in the same person; and this reminds us of what Paul says respecting Onesimus, that he should be received by Philemon as a brother beloved, "both in the flesh and in the Lord." It is pleasing to observe the former of these two affections thus legitimized by the apostle—or the sanction given by him to the natural as well as spiritual love—to the love of friendship and relationship, as well as that love of Christians which is emphatically termed the love of the brethren, and is singled out by St. John as an evidence of our having passed from death unto life.

Ver. 9.—'Our helper in Christ.' This expression, even in our English Bible, powerfully suggests that the help given by Urbane to Paul was in his apostolic work. But the original fixes this more surely. He was the fellow-worker (συνεϱγος) of the apostle.

Ver. 10.—'Approved in Christ'—or found. He was one of those whom Paul here distinguishes by the special proof which he had given of his discipleship.

Ver. 11.—'Which are in the Lord.' This adjunct to the household of Narcissus, and not of Aristobulus, would imply that only a part of Narcissus' family had been converted—whereas all of the other household had been turned to the faith. We may here observe, that Paul confines these salutations only to brethren in Christ—though none more courteous than he to them who were without. His were not common letters, but written for the use of the Churches.

Ver. 13.—'Chosen in the Lord.' Elect—it is not said beloved, as with many of the others. The two expressions harmonize. They who are loved now were loved before the foundation of the world. They who were loved then, are loved even unto the end.

'His mother and mine.' The mother of Rufus by birth, of Paul by affection—a claim of relationship by which he delicately and beautifully propounds the love that he bore to her. Rufus is understood to have been the son of Simon, who was compelled to bear the cross of our Saviour (Mark xv. 21). We may close these remarks by observing that these names are not without their use in clearing up certain points, or at least furnishing ground for certain plausible conjectures, both in the evangelic and in ecclesiastical history. As an example of the latter, there is no reason for doubting the testimony of the ancients—that the Hermas to whom Paul here sends his respects is identical with the apostolic father of that name, whose works have come down to us. For specimens of the help which these names afford, in establishing certain connexions and references, so as to harmonize some of the distant places and passages of the New Testament, and thus elicit a confirmatory evidence for the truth of the evangelic story, see Dr. Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ.'

Ver. 16.—'Salute one another with an holy kiss.' The customary method of salutation in these days—exchanged, however, only between those of the same sex. It is remarkable that, by the testimony of Suetonius, an edict was published by one of the Roman emperors for the abolition of this practice among his subjects—perhaps in order to check abuses, for the prevention of which our apostle enjoins that it shall be a holy salutation. It is a custom adverted to in other places of the New Testament.*

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* 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v. 26; 1 Pet. v. 14.

'The churches of Christ salute you.' Those churches probably to whom he had made known his purpose of writing to the Church at Rome, whose faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. i. 8). We might well imagine the satisfaction which would be spread abroad among the disciples everywhere, when they heard of the progress which Christianity was making in the metropolis of the empire, and with what cordiality they would send their gratulations to the believers there.

Ver. 17.—'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.' Paul recurs to the topic of his unceasing earnestness and desire—the peace or unanimity of the Church. He had just finished a long series of salutations, and enjoined them to exchange these tokens of mutual affection with each other—when, as if the more strikingly to mark his adverse feeling towards the authors and promoters of dissension in their society, he points them out as men with whom, instead of the signs or interchanges of regard, they were to hold no fellowship. He who before had told them whom they were to receive, now tells them whom they are to reject or 'avoid.' The doctrine which they had just learned from him was that of forbearance one for another, in the matter of certain Jewish observances—the doctrine of that charity which endureth all things, save that spirit which is hostile to its own, and wherewith it must ever be at antipodes. For them who caused divisions, such as the judaizing teachers who would have forced their own burdensome ritual on all the converts; or for them who caused offences such as those Gentile believers who, in the wantonness of their liberty, cared not to insult and to wound the consciences of their weaker brethren—for neither of these could our apostle feel the slightest complacency or toleration. They were marked men in his estimation—notorious in the sinister sense of the term: and it strongly evinces the value that he had for unbroken concord in every Christian society—when, in point both of reckoning and treatment, he puts these disturbers of the peace on the same level with those profligates whom he would cast out from the attentions of all the brethren.*

Ver. 18.—'For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' He obviously refers here to the judaizing teachers—because to them who deceived the hearts of the simple, that is, of the scrupulous or weak, who refrained from meats, and attached a religious importance to the eating of herbs (Rom. xiv. 2). There were false teachers in those days, to whose inroads the earlier churches stood peculiarly exposed. They practised on those of a tender conscience, making a trade as it were of their superstitious fears, and made unhallowed use of the ill-gotten ascendency which they obtained over them. Their object, as the apostle here tells us, was not to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but to make out a lazy and luxurious livelihood for themselves—and that at the expense of those whom by good words and fair speeches they had deceived. No wonder that the noble, manly, disinterested Paul, so jealous as he was withal for the maintenance of the pure truth of the gospel, should on so many occasions have protested with such vigour and vehemence against them. It is of such that he seems to speak in Phil. iii. 18, 19, where he denounces the enemies of the cross of Christ, "whose God is their belly;" and in Gal. vi. 12, where he tells of those who "desire to make a fair show." They were the troublers of whom he desired that "they should even be cut off" (Gal. v. 12)—the perverters of the gospel of Christ, who preached another gospel, and whom he pronounces to be "accursed" (Gal. i. 7, 8). These deceivers were specially of the circumcision, who subverted whole houses, and taught things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. i. 10, 11). We can quite imagine them to be of that sort who entered into houses and "led captive silly women" (2 Tim. iii. 6). Our knowledge of such characters and such doings furnishes a clue to the explanation of other passages. It was of such impostors that Peter spake, and who seem to have taken a most shameful advantage over their dupes or victims—"beguiling unstable souls"—given to "covetous practices"—"sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while feasting" with the deceived—and "speaking great swelling words of vanity."* And so also Jude, in exhorting the disciples to whom he wrote, that "they should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," describes to us the men against whom that contest had to be maintained—"men crept in unawares," and "who run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward"—who having insinuated themselves into the society of the faithful, feasted among them without fear—who with their mouths spake great swelling words, and flattered men for their own advantage. *

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* See 1 Cor. v. 11.

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* 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 18, 19.

Ver. 19.—'For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.' What he had before said of their faith he now says of their obedience, that it was spoken of everywhere. He is anxious therefore that they should not tarnish their fair fame—for certain it is that from the ready and general intercourse which subsisted between Rome and all parts of the empire, the story of their degeneracies would as speedily go abroad as did that of the virtues and graces by which they adorned their profession of the gospel. He rejoices in the praise which they had earned from all the churches; but proportional would be his grief should they ever forfeit the reputation which they had acquired. He does not express, however, the same doubt or diffidence of them which he did of the Galatians—yet for their greater security he cautions them to be 'wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.'

The last injunction is analogous to that given by our Saviour to those disciples whom He sent forth as "lambs in the midst of wolves." "Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." But though analogous it does not seem to be identical. The apostles of our Lord needed the wisdom of the serpent for their protection from the wiles of their skilful and practised adversaries, who knew, for they had made a study of it, how best to circumvent and distress their victims. And they were harmless as doves, because they neither felt the disposition, nor had ever cultivated the art of malice. It is thus that men might be wise in one thing and simple in another; and the application of these qualities to the case before us seems to have lain—first, in ability to discriminate what was really and essentially good from that which but claimed or pretended to be so, in virtue of which they cleaved to the one and rejected the other; secondly, in abstaining from all fellowship, and so having no knowledge of their ways, with those deep and mischievous designers who could so sophisticate and so counterfeit evil as to make it pass for that which was good—imposing on their deluded followers by a show of will-worship and zeal for the law, to the utter subversion of the gospel of Christ. By the first they were men in understanding—proving all things, and holding fast that which

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* Jude 4, 11, 12, 16.

is good (1 Thess. v. 21). By the second they were children in malice—strangers to its wishes, and therefore unskilled in its methods or its ways.

Ver. 20.—'And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' A good many manuscripts, and even a warrantable translation of the received reading would authorize our turning this clause from a prophecy into a prayer—'May the God of peace bruise Satan under your feet shortly.' The reference by the apostle to the great adversary of human souls was very naturally suggested by the view he was then taking of those false teachers whom he elsewhere designates as the ministers of Satan transformed into angels of light. And the terms in which the prayer or prophecy is couched, is precisely such as would be suggested by the prediction in Gen. iii. 15, "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." He is the great author of all confusion and controversy in our churches: and the achievement proper to the God of peace, or to His Son, who came to destroy the works of the devil, would be to trample them under foot, and so evolve harmony and order out of all the disturbances by which he retards, though unable to prevent, the final establishment of the triumph of Christ over all His enemies. The invocation for His grace to be with them comes in most appropriately—seeing that this is indeed the great instrument of Satan's overthrow—the Spirit who is at the giving of Christ being the alone victor over the spirit which worketh in the children of disobedience—the spirit of him who is the god of this world. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

It is not unworthy of notice that this Epistle to the Romans seems to have had three distinct conclusions. The first is at the end of the fifteenth chapter, where the last verse is quite in the form of a valedictory invocation; but just as if before the letter had been sent off, there had occurred time enough for the subjoining of something more, we find the apostle adding the salutations of the sixteenth chapter, from the first to the sixteenth verse. As he had recurred to the letter for the purpose of sending these salutations, he is revisited, while in the act of penning or rather of dictating them, with that desirousness which he felt so strongly for the peace of the Church at Rome: and this occasions a prolongation of the letter from the sixteenth to the twentieth verse, which he concludes with a second farewell salutation—'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Amen.'—After this, and with the benefit of a further allowance of time ere the messenger was despatched, there seems to be a second postscript of more salutations, which occupy three verses, from the twentieth to the twenty-fourth—where a third valedictory, the last of all, concludes the epistle.

Ver. 21-23.—Here follow the salutations, not from Paul himself to the individuals whom he names—these he had finished already; nor yet from the churches at large, which also had been given—but from certain Christian friends who were with him, and were desirous of sending through him their respects to the whole Church at Rome.

In the twenty-first verse, there occur two remarkable scriptural names—Timothy, who by the consent of all is he to whom he addressed the two epistles; and Lucius, who, though regarded by some as Lucius of Cyrene, is, by far the greater number of critics, and with more probability, reckoned to be Luke the Evangelist, author of the Gospel and Acts, and the fellow-traveller of Paul. We leave the question undecided, whether the kinsmen here mentioned were nearer relatives, or only Israelites, whom the apostle elsewhere calls his kinsmen according to the flesh.

In the twenty-second verse Paul suspends his dictation, and lets his own amanuensis interpose a salutation from himself to the Church at Rome. In his first epistle to the Corinthians he also suspends his dictation; and, taking up the pen himself, writes—"The salutation of me, Paul, with mine own hand."

'Gaius mine host, and of the whole church,' mentioned in the twenty-third verse, is with good reason conceived to be the Gaius of Corinth whom Paul had baptized (1 Cor. i. 14); from which city this epistle was written. Paul was at that time an inmate of his house; and he takes occasion to make honourable mention of his hospitality to Christians at large—a frequent and most useful virtue, being much called for by the exigencies of the times. Erastus the chamberlain, or city treasurer of Corinth, is an example, that though not many of wealth or high station, yet that some such had become obedient to the faith. As we have just stated that this epistle was written from Corinth, we might give a specimen of the way in which this is reasoned out—or of the kind of data on which such a conclusion is supported. Paul commends Phebe, who seems to have been sent with the epistle to the Church at Rome. She was a deaconess of the Church at Cenchrea, the port of Corinth, and a few miles distant from it. Then Gaius is the host of Paul;* and Gaius was baptized by Paul at Corinth.† Then Erastus is chamberlain of the city, which he does not name. It must have been a well-known city therefore, and in all likelihood this capital of Achaia. Lastly, Erastus, we are told in 2 Tim. iv. 20, abode at Corinth—though probably often absent from it, as to all appearance he was a fellow-helper of Paul, and at times accompanied him in his travels.‡

Ver. 24-27.—'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith;) to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.' The final benediction of Paul comes at last, and closes the epistle. It begins with a repetition of the same which he had already given in the twentieth verse—imploring upon them all the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. What remains is in the general an ascription of glory to the Father of our Lord; but it is of such a complicated and parenthetic structure as to require some attention for unravelling the several topics which are involved in it.

'To him that is of power to stablish you.' This clause is suspended in Paul's own frequent and characteristic way, by the interposal of other matter suggested at the time; and which if removed would connect immediately the words now given with those of the twenty-seventh verse: 'To him that is of power to stablish you .... to God only wise,' &c. The contiguity only, not the connexion, of these two clauses is broken up by what comes between them. 'To him that is of power;' or as Jude says in his closing benediction—"To him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless." To establish a man in the faith is to make him stand fast therein, so as that he shall not fall, or "fall away" (Heb. vi. 6). It is well thus to connect our perseverance with the power of God. He who hath begun the good work can alone confirm and perfect it. It is by a perpetual reference, therefore, in prayer to Him, and for the strengthening influences of His Spirit, that grace is alimented in the heart. Let him who thinketh he standeth, thus take heed lest he fall. Let him work out his salvation with fear and trembling, because sensible of his own weakness, and so having no confidence in himself. Yet let him mix mirth with his trembling; because rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, and looking upward to that God who alone worketh in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

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* Rom. xvi. 23. † 1 Cor. i. 14. ‡ Acts xix. 22.

'According to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ.' May He stablish you in the truths and principles of that system which is agreeable to, so agreeable as to be identical with my gospel or with the gospel which I preach, and which Christ also preached—Paul thus affirming his doctrine and Jesus Christ's doctrine to be at one.

'According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,' or kept secret in ancient times (*χϱονοις αἰωνιοις*). He had before said—'according to my gospel;' and when he now says—'according to the revelation of the mystery,' he but substitutes one method of expression for another—the subject-matter in both being the same, only amplified or expressed otherwise. This gospel was 'kept secret' (*σεσιγημενον*) or held back in silence from the earth—there having been little or nothing said of it to the earlier generations of our species. It has been made a matter of discussion what the mystery here spoken of precisely is. Some would have it specifically to be the calling of the Gentiles, and for countenance to this their explanation of it, would refer to Eph. iii. 9, and Col. i. 26. We have no doubt ourselves, that generally it is the subject-matter of the gospel.

'But now is made manifest.' That which was profoundly hidden before is now made manifest—first in a dimmer and lesser degree by the prophets to the Jews, and afterwards in the fuller light of gospel times made known to all nations. We are not to wonder that the revelation made to the prophets should be spoken of as only made now. At the time when this revelation was first given, its meaning was little known even to the prophets through whom it passed. Though ministered by them, "it was not unto themselves but unto us" (1 Pet. i. 12). It had been given in words to the world centuries before the appearance of our Saviour, yet was only made known for the first time to the disciples of Emmaus, when He opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures—beginning with Moses and the Prophets. What our Saviour did in person to these disciples upon earth, He afterwards did to believers in general by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, and whose office it is to make the sure word of prophecy obvious to their view, by causing the day to dawn and the day-star to arise in their hearts. The gospel might well have been said by the apostle to be manifest by the scriptures of the prophets only now —for only now were these scriptures made manifest.

'According to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith.' To perfect the revelation of the gospel, the work of apostles had to be superadded to that of prophets. The gospel had been witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets—from the time when it lay in enigma till cleared up by the more explicit statements of those who were commissioned to go and preach it unto every creature.

These three verses (25, 26, and 27) might be rendered thus —'Now to Him who is able to establish you in the discipleship of my gospel, which is nothing else than the gospel of Jesus Christ Himself; or in the discipleship of that revelation whereby there has been divulged the truth that was before hidden, and kept back from men in the earlier ages of the world; but is now made manifest, both by the prophetic writings which we in these days have been made more fully to understand, and also by the proclamation of the same, agreeably to the commandment of the everlasting God, amongst all nations, for the purpose of obtaining their submission to the faith—to Him, the only wise God, be glory for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

We may be assured that there is nothing misplaced or inappropriate in the epithets employed by the apostle, and more especially in those which he applies to the Divinity. In particular, when he applies different epithets to Him at different times, there must, we apprehend, be a discriminative reason for his so doing. In the twenty-sixth verse he denominates Him the everlasting God; and in the twenty-seventh, the God only wise. The epithet 'everlasting' seems to have been suggested to the mind of the apostle when he had in view the different and distant ages at which God had His different dealings with men from the beginning of the world—as keeping them in ignorance at its earlier periods, and at length in due time making known the scheme of His salvation. He, the King Eternal, who knows the end from the beginning, knows what is best and fittest to be done at each of the successive stages in the process of that great administration whose goings forth have been of old, and whose issues are from everlasting to everlasting. And He is denominated the only wise, that we, the short-lived creatures of a day, might learn to receive with unquestioning silence all the intimations which He has been pleased to give us. In particular, it should reconcile the Jews to the termination of that economy under which they had hitherto lived, and under which they had vainly arrogated to themselves an exclusive and ever-during superiority over the rest of the species; whereas it appeared that the middle wall of partition was now to be broken down, and that their fancied monopoly of the Divine favour was but a temporary evolution in the history of the Divine government. And so he concludes his epistle, by calling on both parties in the Church to which he writes it, to unite with him in the one ascription of glory to the Father through the Son; and that verily a glory which shall never end.

THE END.

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